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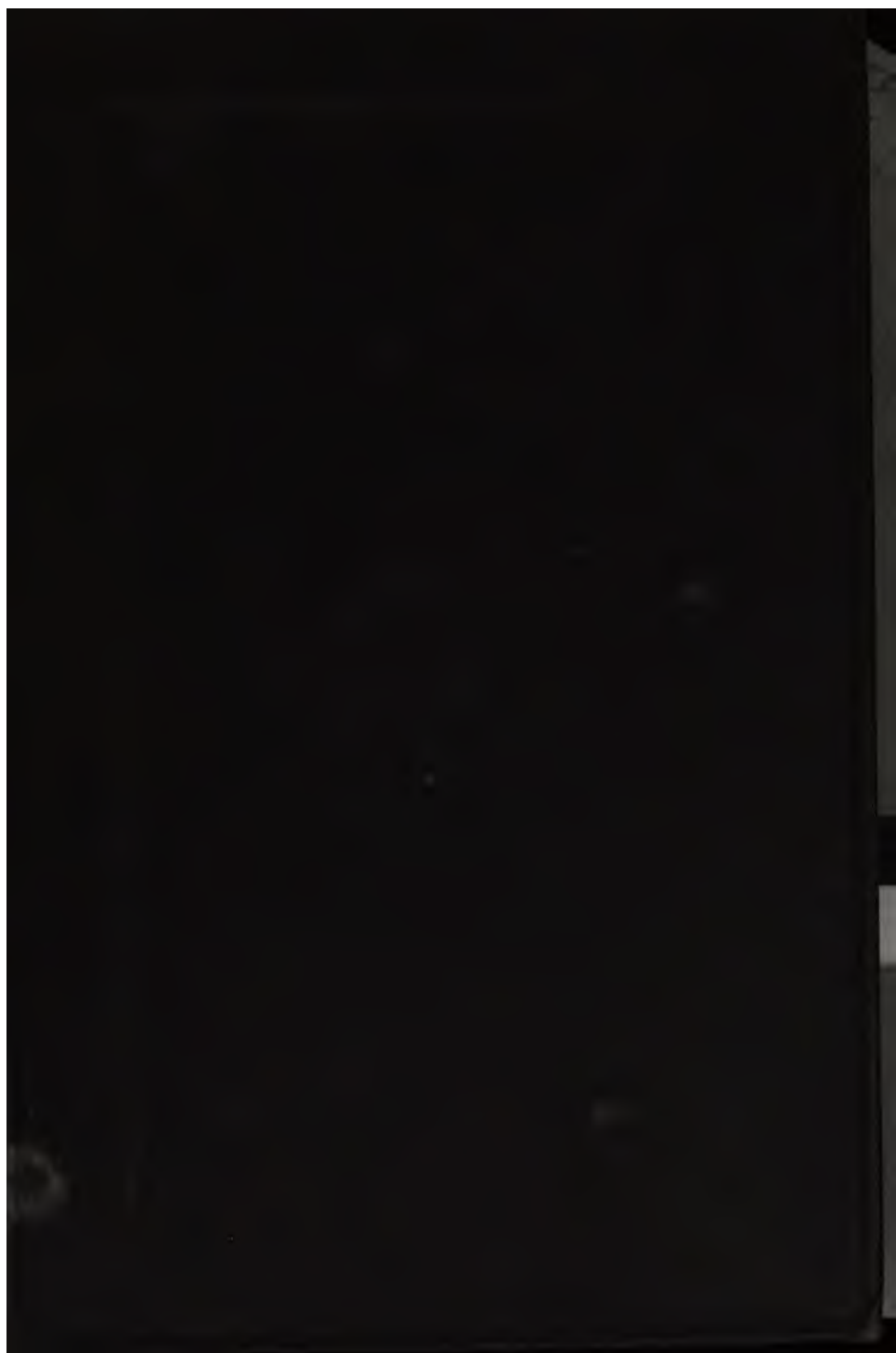
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**History of the Church under the Roman  
Empire.**





# HISTORY OF THE CHURCH

UNDER

*THE ROMAN EMPIRE*

A.D. 30-476

BY THE REV.

A. D. CRAKE, B. A.

CHAPLAIN OF ALL SAINTS' SCHOOL, BLOXHAM

*SANGUIS MARTYRUM SEMEN ECCLESIAE*



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## PREFACE

THE following pages are the result of an attempt to render the history of the Early Church interesting to the general reader, and to bring it within the comprehension of the young Churchman, for whom manuals intended for the theological student possess little or no interest.

Avoiding the more technical details of synods and councils, the author has endeavoured to fix the attention upon their salient features, and to present the great questions at stake before the mind as vividly as lay in his power; while he has dwelt as fully as his space allowed upon the more exciting features of the struggle with Paganism and heresy; upon the battle which was fought in the arena by the martyr, and won by suffering and self-devotion.

Most existing manuals of Church history pre-suppose a knowledge on the part of the reader of the secular history of the period; but the writer has found it expedient, in teaching the young, to combine the two lines of thought, so far as the one tends to elucidate the other; for, as Socrates, the Church historian of the fifth century, well remarks, there is an inseparable connection between them.

All history is the record of God's dealings with man, and His awful attributes may be plainly discerned therein in the eventual triumph of truth and justice, and the sure retribution awaiting corruption, whether in the body politic or ecclesiastical. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the history of the Roman Empire, whose calamities are as beacons to warn us from the shoals and quicksands wherein she perished; and nowhere does the marvellous vitality of the Church attest so plainly her Divine origin as in the record of those days, when she stood the only immovable institution in the utter collapse of the ancient systems of politics, philosophy, and religion.

At that period, when the very shadow of power departed from the city of the seven hills, when the future kingdoms of modern Europe were already beginning to take their place in the political system, and the Church entered upon a new sphere of labour, the writer has closed his present task.

He has endeavoured, so far as in him lay, to consult the *original* authorities; but he must gratefully acknowledge his obligations to the Rev. Professor Bright, whose history of the period between the Edict of Milan and Chalcedon materially assisted in forming the writer's early estimate of the chief actors in the scenes of that important period: nor must he forget yet earlier obligations to the Rev. Canon Robertson, whose valuable History of the Christian Church is so well known to the student. Fleury, as representing the Catholic view of the subject, and Mosheim, the Lutheran, have also been laid under contribution; while the secular history has been mainly abridged

from Gibbon, whose very words have sometimes been retained; and Bingham has been the chief, but not the only authority as to ancient Catholic worship and ritual. It will be seen that the writer is unable to lay claim to original research in this extensive field of labour, nor has he ambitiously aimed at throwing a new light upon the dark places of ecclesiastical history. His aim has been far less ambitious; it has simply been to narrate facts well known to historical students, in such a manner as to interest and instruct the general or youthful reader.

He feels how far the execution of his project has fallen short of the conception; but he can only crave the indulgence of the learned critic, and leave the following pages to plead their own cause as well as may be.

114

# CONTENTS

## CHAPTER I.

### THE CHURCH OF THE APOSTLES, A.D. 30-68.

THE growth and political condition of the Roman Empire—Character of its civilization—Providential design in its extension—Religion of the empire—Its influence upon the people—The Amphitheatres—Slavery—Philosophy—General degradation of society—Pentecost—Attitude of the Jews towards Christianity—The conversion of S. Paul—Jewish and Gentile Christians—Antioch—Ordination of SS. Paul and Barnabas—First missionary journey—Council at Jerusalem—Question of circumcision—Second and third journeys of S. Paul—His imprisonment and voyage to Rome—Further records concerning S. Paul—His journey to the West—Return to Jerusalem—Ordination of Timothy and Titus—Winter in Epirus—Return eastward and arrest—Persecution under Nero—Tacitus—Martyrdom of S. Paul—of S. Peter—Traditions concerning the other apostles . . . Page 1-29

## CHAPTER II.

### THE LATTER DAYS OF S. JOHN, A.D. 68-100.

Enmity between Jew and Gentile—The Roman yoke—Martyrdom of S. James—Supernatural portents—Oppression of Roman governors—Festus—Albinus—Florus—Outrages of Florus—Rebellion—Massacres—Flight of Christians to Pella—Vespasian in Galilee—Events at Rome—Titus besieges Jerusalem—State of the besieged—Destruction of the Temple—Capture of the city—Fate of the survivors—End of the Mosaical dispensation—Council near Jerusalem—Organization of the Church undertaken by S. John—Early ministry of S. John—Ephesus—Martyrdom of Timothy—S. John takes charge of the Seven Churches—The early Gnostics—Persecution under Domitian—S. John



ante portam Latinam—Patmos—The Apocalypse—Other victims of the persecution—Grandsons of S. Jude—Death of Domitian—S. John and the robber—Old age of the apostle—The last Gospel—His death.—Worship and ritual in the first age—Baptism—Its subjects—Confirmation—The Holy Eucharist—Development of ritual—Hour of celebration—Anointing of the sick—The hierarchy . . . 30-55

### CHAPTER III.

#### CHRISTIANITY UNDER TRAJAN, A.D. 98-117.

The Church in conflict with Paganism—Toleration of all national religions by Rome—Causes why not extended to Christianity—The Colosseum—The Catacombs—Letter of Pliny—Martyrdom of S. Ignatius—Trajan invades Parthia—Rebellion of the Jews—Martyrdom of S. Simeon—Death of Trajan.—The Gnostics and their doctrines—Simon Magus—Menander—Cerinthus—Saturninus and others—The Egyptian Gnostics—Basilides—Carpocrates—Valentine—Providential use of Gnosticism . . . 56-77

### CHAPTER IV.

#### CHRISTIANITY UNDER HADRIAN AND THE ANTONINES, A.D. 117-180.

Accession of Hadrian—Rebellion of the Jews—Ælia Capitolina—Barcab—End of the Rebellion—The first Gentile Bishop of Jerusalem—State of the Christians—Liability to persecution—Protest of Grani-  
anus—Hadrian at Athens—Apologies of Quadratus and Aristides—Symphorosa—Accession of Antoninus Pius—Conversion of Justin Martyr—His apology—Accession of Aurelius—Fourth Persecution—Its causes—Calamities of the empire—Charges brought against Christians—S. Polycarp of Smyrna—The persecution at Vienne and Lyons—Legend of the thundering Legion—Papias and Melito—Death of Aurelius at Vienna—Controversial opposition to the Gospel—Celsus . . . 78-103

### CHAPTER V.

#### FROM THE ACCESSION OF COMMODUS TO THE DEATH OF SEVERUS, A.D. 180-211.

Accession of Commodus—His crimes and follies—Martyrdom of Apollonius—S. Ireneus—Montanism—Paschal controversy—Writings of Ireneus—Assassination of Commodus—Pertinax—Didius—Competi-

## CONTENTS.

xi

tors for the throne—Severus prevails—Fifth Persecution—Victims at Lyons—Victims at Alexandria—Origen and his father—Story of Perpetua and her companions—The Catechetical School at Alexandria—Death of Severus—Biography of Tertullian—Heresies concerning the Trinity—Theodotus—Artemon—Praxeas—Christian Philosophy—Pantænus and Clement . . . . . 104-121

## CHAPTER VI.

FROM THE ACCESSION OF CARACALLA AND GETA TO THE DEATH OF  
DECIVS, A.D. 211-251.

Caracalla and Geta succeed Severus—The former slays his brother and reigns alone—Macrinus—Elagabalus—Alexander Severus—Toleration of Christianity—Maximin—The Sixth Persecution—Martyrdom of S. Pontian and of S. Antherinus—Gordian—Philip—S. Babylas and the emperor—Decius—The Seventh Persecution—Edicts—The lapsed—Letters of Dionysius—Sufferings at Smyrna—Martyrdom of Fabian—The Goths—Siege of Philippolis—Defeat and death of Decius—Biography of Origen . . . . . 122-139

## CHAPTER VII.

THE DAYS OF S. CYPRIAN AND THE VALERIAN PERSECUTION.

Accession of Gallus—Æmilianus—Valerian—His early virtues—Macrianus and his counsels—The Eighth Persecution—The edicts and their severity—Early life of S. Cyprian—His conversion—He becomes Bishop of Carthage—The Novatian Schism—The great Plague—Martyrdom of S. Cyprian, of S. Xystus, of S. Laurence, of S. Fructuosus—Rise and progress of the second Persian empire—The Parthians—Artaxerxes—Sapor—Hostilities with Rome—Defeat and captivity of Valerian—His fate—Calamities of the empire . . . . . 140-168

## CHAPTER VIII.

FROM VALERIAN TO DIOCLETIAN, A.D. 260-284.

Accession of Gallienus—Toleration—Martyrdom of Marinus—Claudius—Aurelian—Porphyry—Odenathus and Zenobia—Paul of Samosata—Fall of Palmyra—Deposition of Paul—Manes and Manichæism—The Ninth Persecution—Death of Aurelian—Tacitus—Probus—Carus—Carinus and Numerian—Accession of Diocletian—Threatening prospects of the Church. . . . . 169-171

## CHAPTER IX.

## THE GREAT TENTH PERSECUTION.

Early life of Diocletian—His character—He associates Maximian in the government—Constantius and Galerius made Cæsars—Rebellion of Carausius and Allectus—Galerius in Persia—The winter of 302-3 in Nicomedia—The Theban legion—Diocletian urged to persecute—The successive edicts—Fire in the palace—S. George—Persecution begins at Nicomedia—It becomes universal—Constantius in Britain—S. Alban—Maximian in Italy—S. Pancras—S. Sebastian—S. Agnes—S. Vincent—Galerius in the East—Victims in Phrygia—Abdication of Diocletian . . . . . 172-184

## CHAPTER X.

## CONSTANTINE AND MAXENTIUS, A.D. 305-312.

Galerius and Constantius Emperors—Galerius appoints Severus and Maximin Cæsars, passing over Constantine and Maxentius—Return of Constantine to Britain—Death of Constantius—Constantine succeeds him—Revolt of Maxentius at Rome—Death of Severus—Accession of Maxentius—Maximian resumes the purple—Six emperors at once—Death of Maximian in Gaul—Death of Galerius in the East—Administration of Constantine in Britain; of Maxentius in Italy—Their quarrel—Preparations for war—Constantine invades Italy—Battles of Turin, Verona, and the Milvian Bridge—Death of Maxentius—Constantine enters Rome in triumph . . . . . 185-197

## CHAPTER XI.

## EARLY CHRISTIAN WORSHIP AND RITUAL.

Growth of the Church during the first three centuries—Testimony of Anacletus, of Justin, Irenæus, and Tertullian—Arabia—Persia—Gaul—Britain—Spain—Germany—Africa.—The Hierarchy—The minor orders—The arrangement of the churches—The Holy Eucharist—Primitive Liturgies—Reservation—The Agapæ—Baptism—Confirmation—Penance—The different orders of Penitents—Severity of the rule—Its eventual relaxation—Celibacy—Monasticism—S. Antony—Pachomius—The monks of Nitria and Scetis—Festivals and Fasts of the Church . . . . . 198-217

CHAPTER XII.

FROM THE ACCESSION OF CONSTANTINE TO THE COUNCIL OF  
NICEÆA, A.D. 312-325.

Position of Constantine in relation to the Church—Edict of Milan—  
Toleration formally proclaimed—Maximin renews the persecution—  
Invades the dominions of Licinius—his defeat and death—The La-  
barum—Further measures of Constantine in favour of Christianity—  
Licinius renews the persecution—The forty Martyrs—Battle of  
Adrianople—Defeat of Licinius—his death—Establishment of Chris-  
tianity as the religion of the empire—Rise and progress of Donatism  
—The council of Arles—Origin of the Arian controversy at Alex-  
andria—Early life of Arius—Sermon of Alexander—Excitement in  
the city—Arius expelled—Eusebius of Nicomedia welcomes him—  
Letter of Constantine—A general council summoned—Relations of  
Church and State . . . . . 218-234

CHAPTER XIII.

FROM THE COUNCIL OF NICEÆA TO THE DEATH OF CONSTANTINE,  
A.D. 325-337.

The general Council at Niceæa—Condemnation of Arius—The Nicene  
Creed—Acesius the Novatian—S. Helena at Jerusalem—Constanti-  
nople founded—Rapid progress of conversion—Crispus—S. Athanasius  
Bishop of Alexandria—Arius summoned to Court—Plots against  
Athanasius—Council of Tyre—Athanasius banished to Treves—Death  
of Arius—Baptism and death of Constantine the Great. . . 235-249

CHAPTER XIV.

THE SONS OF CONSTANTINE, A.D. 337-361.

Massacre in the family of the late Emperor—Partition of the empire  
between his sons Constantius, Constans, and Constantine—Arian in-  
fluence at court—Restoration of Athanasius to his see—Death of  
Constantine—Council at Antioch—Second expulsion of Athanasius—  
Gregory of Cappadocia takes possession of the see—Outrages of the  
Arians—Arian Creeds—Paul and Macedonius contend for the bishopric  
of Constantinople—The Arians procure the appointment of Mace-  
donius—Council of Sardica—Schism between East and West—Con-  
stans causes the second restoration of Athanasius—The interview

of the latter with Constantius—Death of Constans—War with Magnentius—Councils of Arles and Milan—Cruel persecution of the Catholics—Liberius, Bishop of Rome, gives way—Hosius of Cordova yields—S. Cyril of Jerusalem—Third exile of Athanasius—Intrusion of George at Alexandria—Cruelties of the Arians—The deserts of the Thebaid—The monks—Escapes of Athanasius from the Arians—Parties amongst the Arians—Councils of Ariminum and Seleucia—Death of Constantius—Persecution in Persia—Martyrdoms of Simeon and others—Siege of Nisibis—S. James of Nisibis . . . 250-272

## CHAPTER XV.

JULIAN THE APOSTATE, A.D. 361-363.

Early years of Julian and Gallus—Gallus at Antioch—His cruelties and misgovernment—His fate—Julian at Athens—His inclinations towards the pagan worship—His apostasy—Initiation into the heathen mysteries at Ephesus—His government in Gaul—His victories—Jealousy of Constantius—Rebellion of the soldiers—Julian proclaimed emperor—Vain negotiations—March of Julian—Death of Constantius—Julian's measures against Christianity—The Army—Maris of Chalcedon—Local persecutions—Murder of George at Alexandria—Athanasius reappears—His fourth exile—Julian attempts to rebuild the Temple of Jerusalem—Julian at Antioch—Scenes at Daphne—The relics of S. Babylon—Mark of Arethusa—Sufferers at Meros—Julian leaves for Persia—Progress of the expedition—The desert—The last night—Death of Julian—Traditions concerning it . . . 273-296

## CHAPTER XVI.

FROM THE DEATH OF JULIAN TO THE ACCESSION OF THEODOSIUS,  
A.D. 363-378.

Accession of Jovian—Restoration of Christianity—Submission to the Persians—Cession of territory.—Nisibis given up—Jovian at Antioch—Fourth restoration of Athanasius—Death of Jovian—Accession of Valentinian and Valens—Cruelty of Valentinian—His virtues—Sorcery—Persecution of the Catholics by Valens—Death of Liberius—Riot at Rome—Death of S. Athanasius—Victims to the persecution—Eighty clergy burnt at sea—S. Basil of Cæsarea—Basil and Modestus—Death of Valentinian—S. Martin, Bishop of Tours—Outrages at Alexandria under Lucius—The Goths become Christians under Ulphilas—S. Ambrose, Bishop of Milan—Early years of S. Jerome—Invasion of the Goths—Death of Valens . . . . . 297-312

## CHAPTER XVII.

FROM THE ACCESSION OF THEODOSIUS TO THE CONVERSION OF  
S. AUGUSTINE, A.D. 379-387.

Gratian associates Theodosius in the government—Edicts against Paganism—The title Pontifex Maximus renounced by Gratian—The altar of victory in the senate removed—Destruction of Temples—The Macedonians—Basil and Gregory, their early years at Athens—Gregory at Constantinople—Baptism of Theodosius—The see of Constantinople restored to the Catholics—Second Ecumenical Council—The emperor and Amphilochius—Nectarius, Bishop of Constantinople—Retirement of Gregory—Murder of Gratian—Symmachus and S. Ambrose—Priscillian put to death for heresy—S. Jerome at Rome, at Jerusalem—The Empress Justina and S. Ambrose—Scenes at Milan—The relics of Gervasius and Protasius—Victory of S. Ambrose—S. Augustine at Milan . . . . . 313-333

## CHAPTER XVIII.

FROM THE CONVERSION OF ST. AUGUSTINE TO THE DEATH OF  
THEODOSIUS, A.D. 387-395.

Early life of S. Augustine—His mother, Monica—He leaves Africa for Italy—His conversion and baptism—Death and burial of Monica—Augustine returns to Africa—His earlier works—Defeat and death of Maximus—Statues of Antioch—S. John Chrysostom—Massacre at Thessalonica—Penance of Theodosius—Administration of penance—Last days of S. Gregory Nazianzen—Augustine ordained coadjutor Bishop of Hippo—Heathen worship absolutely prohibited—Serapis—Destruction of the temples at Canopus—Death of the young Valentinian—Eugenius and Arbogastes—Their defeat and death—Christian observances—Origin of the Origenistic controversy—Vigilantius—Death of Theodosius—His character . . . . . 334-359

## CHAPTER XIX.

FROM THE DEATH OF THEODOSIUS TO THE SACK OF ROME BY  
ALARIC, A.D. 395-410.

Early life of Chrysostom, ordained priest at Antioch—His eloquence—Accession of Honorius and Arcadius—Arsenius—Stilicho and Rufinus—Murder of Rufinus—Rebellion of Gildo in Africa—The Donatists—Death of S. Ambrose—Death of S. Martin—Chrysostom appointed

Bishop of Constantinople—His enemies—Eutropius—Eudoxia—Theophilus of Alexandria—His violence and crimes—Monks of Nitria—The long brothers—Outrages—The long brothers arrive at Constantinople—Theophilus arrives—Synod of the Oak—Banishment of Chrysostom—His return—Second banishment—Exile and death at Comana—Alaric in Italy—Battle of Pollentia—Victory of Rome—Last gladiatorial combat—Radagaisus in Italy—Defeat at Florence—Ravages in Gaul—Death of Stilicho—Alaric again in Italy—Rome taken, and given to fire and sword—The vessels of S. Peter—Reflections on the fall of Rome . . . . . 360-384

## CHAPTER XX.

FROM THE DEATH OF ARCADIVS TO THE DEATH OF  
S. AUGUSTINE, A.D. 408-430.

Death of Arcadius—Theodosius succeeds—Pulcheria and her sisters, their piety and talent—Synesius, Bishop of Ptolemais—Theophilus patriarch of Alexandria dies, and is succeeded by S. Cyril—Early life of S. Cyril—Expulsion of the Jews from Alexandria—Murder of Hypatia—Death of Pope Innocent—Further history of the Donatists—Their peculiar tenets—Outrages under Gildo—Council of Carthage—Condemnation of the Donatists—The penal statutes put in force—End of the struggle, the Donatists yield—The Pelagian controversy—Early life of Pelagius, his tenets, he comes to Rome, there finds an associate in Cælestius—Crosses to Africa, where he leaves Cælestius and repairs to the Holy Land—S. Augustine takes up the controversy—Pelagianism condemned in Africa—Pelagius escapes condemnation in Palestine by evasion—Pope Zosimus takes the part of Pelagius—The Africans persist in their opposition—Final condemnation of Pelagianism by civil and spiritual powers—S. Augustine's doctrines on grace—Cassian's doctrines—Death of S. Jerome—Honorius dies—Placidia succeeds—Rebellion of John—Ætius and Boniface; treachery of the former; the latter calls the Vandals into Africa—Vandal conquest of Africa—Siege of Hippo—Last days of S. Augustine, his death—Fate of Hippo . . . . . 385-404

## CHAPTER XXI.

THE COUNCIL OF EPHEBUS AND THE NESTORIAN CONTROVERSY,  
A.D. 431.

Nestorius appointed to the see of Constantinople—His first sermon—His persecuting tendencies—Alexandria and Antioch—Sermon of Anastatius, excitement caused thereby—Cyril drawn into the controversy

—Appeal to Rome—Steps taken by Celestine—Theodosius summons a council to meet at Ephesus—Delay of John of Antioch—Theodoret of Cyrus—The council opened—Condemnation of Nestorius—John arrives—Mutual recriminations—Candidian and the Government—Pretended excommunication of Cyril and Memnon—Legates from Rome reach the Council—Count John arrives—Letters from the Catholics secretly conveyed to Constantinople—Excitement produced—Dalmatius leaves his monastery—Theodosius summons deputies to Chalcedon—Banishment of Nestorius—The decisions of the council confirmed, and the council dissolved—Cyril and Memnon return to their sees—Violent proceedings of John—Paul of Emesa restores peace between him and Cyril—Theodoret of Cyrus reconciled—Alexander of Hierapolis expelled—Fate of Nestorius—Further History of Nestorianism . . . . . 405-427

## CHAPTER XXII.

FROM THE COUNCIL OF EPHEBUS TO THE LATROCINIUM, A.D. 431-449.

Pelagianism in Britain—Germanus and Lupus—The Alleluia Battle—Fate of British Christianity—S. Patrick in Ireland—Persecution in Persia—Acacius of Amida—S. Paulinus of Nola—Vandals in Africa—Carthage taken—Cruel persecution—Translation of the relics of S. Chrysostom to Constantinople—Accession of Pope Leo—The Huns—Death of S. Cyril—Dioscorus succeeds to the patriarchate of Alexandria—Eusebius accuses Eutyches—Synod of Constantinople—Interference of Dioscorus—Council summoned to meet at Ephesus—Deputies of Rome—Tome of S. Leo—Violent proceedings of Dioscorus—Acquittal of Eutyches—Condemnation of Flavian and Eusebius—Outrages of the Eutychians—Barsumas—Escape of Hilarus—Death of Flavian . . . . . 428-451

## CHAPTER XXIII.

THE COUNCIL OF CHALCEDON AND THE EUTYCHIAN CONTROVERSY, A.D. 451.

Theodosius ratifies the proceedings of the Latrocinium—Leo steadfastly opposes them—Appeal to Valentinian III. at Rome—Death of Theodosius the younger—Pulcheria and Marcian—A General Council summoned—The opening at Chalcedon—Vindication of Flavian and Eusebius—The Tome of S. Leo—Criminal charges against Dioscorus—His condemnation and banishment—Adoption of the Tome of S. Leo as a standard of faith—The Emperor Marcian appears at the council—Theodoret of Cyrus restored to his see—The twenty-eighth canon



of Chalcedon—Close of the council—Alarming progress of the Huns—Dangers threatening Christendom—Invasion of Gaul—Devastation of the cities—The siege of Orleans—Defeat of Attila by Ætius and Theodoric—He invades Italy—Leo persuades him to spare the city—His death—Collapse of the dominion of the Huns—Assassination of Ætius, and of Valentinian III. . . . . 452-470

## CHAPTER XXIV.

THE FALL OF THE WESTERN EMPIRE, A.D. 455-476.

Progress of the Vandals—Corruption of the Roman government—Maximus—Genseric reaches Italy—Leo obtains the lives of the citizens, but Rome is plundered by the Vandals, and the spoil conveyed to Carthage—Charity of Deogratias, Bishop of Carthage—The last Emperors of Rome—The insignia of power conveyed to Constantinople—Odoacer, King of Italy—Fate of the provinces—The Saxons conquer Britain—Conquest of Gaul by the Franks, conversion of Clovis—The Visigoths conquer Spain—They abandon Arianism—The Vandal persecution in Africa—Miracle at Tipsasa—Death of Huneric—Cessation of the persecution—Conquest of the Vandals by Belisarius—The Lombards—End of the Arian controversy . 471-485

## CHAPTER XXV.

## SUPPLEMENTARY.

Growth of the Church—Nestorianism prevalent in the East—Catholicism almost coextensive with Empire at close of period—Rise of the Papal power; causes thereof—Monasticism—S. Athanasius brings it to Rome—S. Hilarion, S. Basil, S. Martin—Rapid growth of the system—Its extent—Manners and customs of the monks—The pillar saints—Simeon Stylites—Causes of such excesses—The sacred buildings—Sanctuary, nave, narthex, baptistery, exedrae, etc.—The Holy Eucharist—*Missa Catechumenorum*—*Missa Fidelium*—Relaxation of discipline—Presence of Non-communicants—Frequency of celebration—Reservation—Infant communion—Ceremonial—Lights—Incense—Vestments—Funeral customs—Prayers for the dead—Invocation of saints—Veneration of relics—Pilgrimages—Christian art—The cross—The crucifix—The Virgin and Child—Decline of learning—The Platonic philosophy—The philosophy of Aristotle—Conclusion . 486

## CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

A.D.	EMPERORS.	A.D.	REMARKABLE EVENTS.
14	TIBERIUS	30	Descent of the Holy Ghost at Pentecost.
		34	Conversion of S. Paul.
37	CALIGULA . .	38	Conversion of Cornelius.
41	CLAUDIUS . .	45	Ordination of SS. Paul and Barnabas.
		51	First General Council.
54	NERO . .	63	First Imprisonment of S. Paul.
		64	<i>First Persecution</i> begins.
68	GALBA : OTHO : VI- TELLIUS : VESPASIAN	67	Martyrdom of SS. Peter and Paul.
		70	Destruction of Jerusalem.
		—	Council near Jerusalem.
79	TITUS . .		
81	DOMITIAN . .	95	<i>Second Persecution.</i>
96	NERVA . .	97	Gospel of S. John.
98	TRAJAN . .	99	Death of S. John.
		106	<i>Third Persecution.</i>
		107 (?)	Martyrdom of S. Ignatius.
117	HADRIAN . .	132	Rebellion of the Jews under Barcocab.
138	ANTONINUS PIUS .	151	First Apology of Justin Martyr.

A.D.	EMPERORS.	A.D.	REMARKABLE EVENTS.
161	MARCUS AURELIUS .	166	<i>Fourth Persecution.</i> —Martyr. of Polycarp.
		171	Rise of Montanism.
		174	Thundering Legion.
		177	Martyrs at Lyons.
180	COMMODUS . . . .		
190	PERTINAX . . . .		
192	DIDIUS . . . . .		
193	SEVERUS . . . . .	202	<i>Fifth Persecution.</i> —S. Irenæus.
		220	S. Perpetua and her companions.
		206	S. Clement of Alexandria.
211	CARACALLA & GETA		
217	MACRINUS. . . . .		
218	ELAGABALUS . . . .		
222	ALEXANDER SEVERUS		
235	MAXIMIN . . . . .	235	<i>Sixth Persecution.</i>
238	GORDIAN . . . . .	245	Death (?) of Tertullian.
244	PHILIP . . . . .		
249	DECIUS . . . . .	249	<i>Seventh Persecution</i> begins.
		251	Schism of Novatus.
251	GALLUS . . . . .	253	Death of Origen.
254	ÆMILIANUS . . . . .	257	<i>Eighth Persecution</i> begins.
		258	Martyrdom of S. Cyprian.
		—	Martyrdom of S. Xystus and S. Laurence.
—	VALERIAN . . . . .		
260	GALLIENUS . . . . .		
268	CLAUDIUS . . . . .	270	Paul of Samosata deposed.
270	AURELIAN . . . . .	272	Manes, 271–272.
275	TACITUS . . . . .	275	<i>Ninth Persecution.</i>
	PROBUS . . . . .		
276	FLORINUS . . . . .		
282	CARUS . . . . .		

# CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE.

xxi

A.D.	EMPERORS.	A.D.	REMARKABLE EVENTS.
283	CARINUS NUMERIAN		
284	DIOCLETIAN . . .		
286	{ DIOCLETIAN AND MAXIMIAN . . }	302	<i>Tenth Persecution.</i>
		304	Abdication of Diocletian.
308	SIX EMPERORS AT ONCE.— <i>See page</i> 190 . . . . .		
312	CONSTANTINE THE GREAT . . . . .	312	Defeat and Death of Maxentius.
		313	Edict of Milan.
		316	Constantine decides against Donatists.
		319	Persecution under Licinius.
		326	GENERAL COUNCIL AT NICÆA.
		326	S. Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria.
		335	Council of Tyre.
		336	Death of Arius.
		337	Baptism and Death of Constantine.
337	{ CONSTANTINE . . CONSTANTIUS . . CONSTANS . . .		
		340	Constantine defeated and slain by Constans
		347	Council of Sardica.
		—	Birth of S. Chrysostom.
		350	Constans slain by Magnentius.
		353	{ Battle of Mursa. Constantius sole Emperor.
		354	Birth of S. Augustine.
		355	Councils of Arles and Milan.
		356	{ Exile of Liberius. Arian Outrages in Alexandria. Escape of S. Athanasius.
361	JULIAN . . . . .	357	Councils of Ariminum and Seleucia.
		363	Attempt to rebuild the Temple.
363	JOVIAN . . . . .	—	Death of Julian.
364	{ VALENTINIAN (W) VALENS (E) . . .	367	Riots at Rome, Damasus and Felix.

A.D.	EMPERORS.	A.D.	REMARKABLE EVENTS.
375	GRATIAN (W) AND VALENTINIAN II.	370	S. Basil, Bishop of Cæsarea.
		373	Death of S. Athanasius.
		374	S. Ambrose, Bishop of Milan.
		375	Death of Valentinian I.
		376	Ulphilas, the apostle of the Goths.
		378	Death of Valens, and close of Arian persecution.
379	THEODOSIUS THE GREAT . . . .	379	Death of S. Basil of Cæsarea.
		380	SECOND GENERAL COUNCIL AT CONSTANTINOPLE.
		383	Death of Gratian.
		384	Priscillian put to death for heresy.
		386	S. Jerome retires to Bethlehem.
		387	Conversion of S. Augustine.
		388	Defeat and death of Maximus.
		389	Death of S. Gregory Nazianzen.
		390	Penance of Theodosius.
		—	Heathen worship prohibited.
395	{ ARCADIUS (E) AND HONORIUS (W) .	392	Murder of Valentinian II.
		393	Origenistic controversy begins.
		395	S. Augustine consecrated bishop of Hippo.
		397	Death of S. Ambrose.
		—	Death of S. Martin.
		404	Banishment of S. Chrysostom.
		—	Gladiatorial shows abolished.
		407	Defeat of Radagaisus.
		—	Death of S. Chrysostom.
		408	Death of Arcadius.
		409	Pelagius at Rome.
		410	Sack of Rome by Alaric.
		411	Conference at Carthage—defeat of the Donatists.
		412	S. Cyril, Bishop of Alexandria.
		418	Pelagius condemned by Pope Zosimus.
		420	Death of S. Jerome.

A.D.	EMPERORS.	A.D.	REMARKABLE EVENTS.
425	VALENTINIAN III. (W) . . . . .	420	Persecution in Persia.
		428	Nestorius, Bishop of Constantinople.
		—	Vandals enter Africa.
		429	S. Germanus and S. Lupus in Britain.
		430	Death of S. Augustine.
		431	THIRD GENERAL COUNCIL AT EPHESUS.
		432	S. Patrick in Ireland.
		439	Carthage taken by Genseric.
		440	S. Leo, Bishop of Rome.
		444	Dioscorus succeeds S. Cyril.
		449	The Latrocinium.
451	{ MARCIAN AND PULCHERIA (E) .	451	GENERAL COUNCIL OF CHALCEDON.
455	MAXIMUS (W) . .	451	Battle of Chalons.
—	AVITUS (W) . . .	453	Death of Atilla.
457	MAJORIAN (W) . .	455	Rome taken by Genseric.
—	LEO I. (E) . . .	—	Charity of Deogratias.
461	RICIMER (W) . . .	461	Death of S. Leo—Hilarus succeeds.
467	ANTHEMIUS (W) . .	—	S. Simeon Stylites dies.
472	OLYBRIUS (W) . .	476	Death of Genseric the Vandal.
473	GLYCERIUS (W.) .	—	Odoacer, King of Italy.
474	LEO II. (E) . . .		
475	NEPOS (W) . . .		
476	AUGUSTULUS (W) .		
	ZENO (E) . . . .		

## ERRATA.

Page 385 to 404, chap. xx., in heading *for* From the accession of Arcadius *read* From the death of Arcadius.

„ 428, chap. xxii., in heading *for* 430 *read* 431.

## CHAPTER I.

### THE CHURCH OF THE APOSTLES.

A.D. 30-68.

THE day of Pentecost was the birthday of the Christian Church, when, according to the promise of Jesus Christ, the Holy Ghost, the promised Comforter, descended to abide in her for ever, and to guide her into all truth.

In order to gain a full comprehension of the history and position of the Church in the days of the Apostles, it is necessary to cast a brief glance at the political condition of that mighty empire under whose dominion the whole civilized world then lay prostrate.

Nearly eight centuries earlier, a small colony of fugitives and outlaws selected seven low hills, rising on the banks of the Tiber, about eighteen or twenty miles from the sea, for the site of a city destined, little as they knew it, to give laws to the world and to influence human society to the end of time.

It was more than three centuries before the influence of the infant state was felt beyond its immediate neighbourhood ; but after that period its growth was very rapid. In the fourth century before Christ it became the dominant



power of Italy, and soon possessed the entire peninsula. In the next century, the third before our era, it entered upon a struggle for life or death with Carthage, the great maritime power of Africa, and emerged from the conflict victorious. The following century added nearly all the countries bordering upon the Mediterranean to its dominion. The conquests of Alexander the Great, in Western Asia, were wrested from the hands of his degenerate successors.

Thus in the course of time Syria became a Roman province, and the annexation of the Holy Land shortly followed: Pompey the Great was the first Roman who entered Jerusalem in triumph, defiling even the Holy of Holies by his unhallowed intrusion.

Still the sceptre had not wholly departed from Israel; for Herod, the son of the Idumæan Antipater, was allowed to rule as her king in submission to Rome, and was at once one of her mightiest kings, and, save in name, her last. It was at this period that, emerging from the fierce struggles of the civil wars, Rome attained her greatest height under Augustus Cæsar, the nephew of the first conqueror of Britain, victorious by the defeat or death of all his opponents.

The very shadow of liberty scarcely remained at Rome herself. The republic was swallowed up by the empire, and the will of one man ruled the world. Greece was content to shine in literature, and to forget her ancient glory. Egypt had forgotten her Pharaohs and Ptolemies, to bow at the feet of a Roman governor. In short, from the Tigris to the straits of Gibraltar, from the mountains

of Atlas to the straits of Dover, Rome and her civilization ruled triumphant when the *Prince of peace* was born.

It was a mighty civilization, such as the world had never seen before, and has hardly seen since. Inferior to our own in its grasp upon the material world, it surpassed it in all that could minister to luxury and sensual delight. It had exquisite sculpture, gorgeous temples: art was its servant. Its organization was all but perfect. The provinces were kept in order and prosperity by a system so complete, that the presence of a few legions sufficed to preserve peace where large standing armies are now maintained. The police system was so well organized, that if the emperor wished to banish an obnoxious subject, as Augustus banished Ovid, he simply ordered him to repair to his place of exile on a given day, and the victim had no choice but to obey. Thus the world became a vast prison, of which Cæsar kept the key; and, deprived of the nobler aspirations which once filled the minds of heroes and patriots, men strove to find their happiness in luxury and self-indulgence.

Yet the intoxication of boundless power and wealth compensated for the loss of liberty, in the opinion of the Roman populace; and we can hardly picture to ourselves the glittering pomp which attracted the vulgar, when all Rome mounted to the temple of Jupiter Capitolinus—the people, the legions, the senate, all the insignia of national triumph and victory—to return thanks for some country enslaved, or some myriads of slaughtered barbarians.

For, alas! one thing was utterly wanting amidst this mighty and voluptuous civilization—Christianity, and

with it, as its natural consequence, love towards God and love towards man, the great principles of the revelation of Jesus Christ, were wanting.

To the Greek, all the other nations of the world were but "the barbarians," concerning whose happiness or misery he troubled himself little. To the Roman also, all beyond his own political circle was alien; he heard with complacency, nay, even with pleasure, of the destruction of myriads of Persians or Britons by famine, sword, or pestilence.

The brightest characters of the heathen world—men, by the beauty of whose writings we are enraptured—were little better than the common herd. Cicero, who sometimes wrote, as in his treatise "*De Senectute*," as if the dawning light inspired his pen, gloated over the assassination of Clodius, and observed its anniversary as a festival. Plato, who had caught his inspiration from Socrates, the greatest moral teacher of the heathen world, and whose inspired wisdom approached the most closely to the sublime morality of the Gospel, congratulated the Athenians as possessing, beyond all other Greeks, a hatred to the barbarians, namely, to all not of their own kindred.

Forgiveness of injuries was more commonly accounted a crime than a virtue. The conquered foe in the Roman triumph found his goal, like Jugurtha, in that horrible pit the Tullianum, while his victor feasted in the Capitol above; or was put to a cruel death at the moment the sweet savour of incense arose from the altar, as the conqueror approached the culmination of his triumphal entry.

At the same time it must be fully admitted, that it was

not without a providential design that the whole world was thus united under the influence and dominion of one mighty power; and it must also be conceded that, grievous although the oppression of Roman governors may have been in particular instances, yet upon the whole their rule was preferable to that which they superseded, as we should even gather from the inspired record contained in the New Testament.

The period when our Lord was born was one of profound peace. Augustus Cæsar, uniting in his own person the various offices of emperor, pontiff, censor, tribune, and consul, ruled over a subjugated world; and about the eighteenth year of our Lord's earthly life the sceptre passed into the hands of his unworthy successor, Tiberius, in whose reign the mighty atonement was consummated on Calvary.

One common language—one common code of laws, modified, it is true, by local circumstances—united the civilized nations of the earth, and the benignant influence of literature and art had penetrated countries hitherto sunk in utter barbarism, thus preparing the way for the sublime teaching of Apostles and Evangelists.

Yet, alas! at this period the darkness of idolatry and superstition had overshadowed the earth, and gross darkness the people.

Save in Judæa, all nations acknowledged a multitude of deities, whom they worshipped with rites as debasing as impious, and whom they supposed to preside over particular nations, or particular shrines, under varied appellations. It was the policy of Rome to tolerate all

national religions, thus placing the God of Israel and the brute gods of Egypt upon the same level. The deities of many nations were simply virtues, or even vices, personified; of others, departed heroes, who had once deserved well of mankind. The natural world furnished another class of imaginary gods: the sun, the moon, the stars, the rivers, the winds were deified; and in Egypt the deification of brute beasts, or loathsome insects, seemed to form the climax to the absurd yet sad inventions of the human intellect in search of a God.

A whole hierarchy existed in many countries for the purpose of carrying on this superstitious worship. Pontiffs, flamens, augurs, and other ministers had their appointed offices; and the graceful mythology of Greece, adopted by Rome, attributed each victory or blessing to the intervention of some beneficent deity, or sought to avert calamity or death by some heroic or appalling sacrifice.

Of *one* aspect to the learned, of *another* to the vulgar, this graceful yet fatal superstition was utterly powerless to reform the individual or to check profligacy, which indeed it sometimes encouraged; for had not vices their deities? The very sports of the populace were considered tame and uninteresting, unless they involved the shedding of blood or the infliction of agony.

The most sensational tragedy or exciting drama could not satisfy those who were in the habit of witnessing real bloodshed in the amphitheatres, where hundreds of gladiators bled and died to make a Roman holiday; or who habitually resorted to the basilicas to witness the daily

examination of slaves under torture in those so-called courts of justice.

But the institution of slavery was the greatest blot upon the constitution of the Roman empire. Multitudes of these unhappy men had been reduced through the fortune of war, or the pressure of other calamities, to the miserable position they occupied. They were entirely at the mercy of their owner in the days of the early empire. "Property," says a Roman writer, "is of three classes—vocal, semi-vocal, and mute;"—vocal as slaves, semi-vocal as oxen, mute as articles of furniture.

Within the sanctuary of a Roman villa the ordinary law seldom sought to penetrate. The dealings of the owner with his dependents were those of an absolute lord. If for any trifling offence, or in mere caprice, he chose to mutilate, to crucify, or otherwise torture to death his unhappy slaves, they were his own property; and could not a man do as he pleased with his own? The law even provided that, if a slave were rendered useless by judicial torture (and without torture his evidence was valueless), his master should be reimbursed at the public expense. The slave's limbs or life were not his own. All this appeared rooted in the very nature of things to the heathen. Even the virtuous and patriotic Cato counselled the "removal" of aged slaves when past work; and thus the scenes of shameless iniquity which the household of a Roman lord might present may be more easily imagined than described.

So vile was human life, so cheap the slave, that the cry, "*Sardi venales*," "*Sardinians for sale*," passed into a proverb, to express a glut in the market or the vileness

of its commodities. Thus did man, made in the image of God, deface that image.

But it may well be asked, Were there no noble minds who rose superior to the general corruption, who found it possible to believe in a Supreme Being, who would render to every man according to his works, and who, in the strength of that belief, wrought righteousness?

There were indeed such exceptions. The husks which the swine ate could not satisfy such noble minds as those of Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, or Cicero; yet their guesses at truth were but vague and indistinct. And genial scoffers, like the gay Horace or Juvenal, leaving the belief in such mysteries "to children not yet old enough to pay for their baths," nevertheless deemed it right and politic to supply the multitude with temples, shrines, oracles, and all the paraphernalia of heathen worship.

Therefore the Epicureans, who wallowed in sensuality, and placed the object of human life in the gratification of the senses, equally with the more noble Stoics, who gloried in the subjugation of the passions, and with the dreaming Platonists, who left the realms of action for the mazes of a graceful philosophy, conformed to the public observances, deeming it the duty of each good citizen thus to obey the State.

But the cause of the Church cannot be pleaded, or her triumphs fully recognized, since no pen of modern historian could portray the gross vice and fearful corruption of the age in which she commenced her mighty task. The inspired pen of an Apostle has partially revealed it.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Romans i. 21-32.

Suffice it to add that the whole ingenuity and wisdom of mankind seemed concentrated on the perfection of sensual indulgence; that the revenues of provinces were squandered upon an imperial banquet, or the gratification of more inhuman or coarser passions; while the subject populations groaned beneath the publicans or tax-gatherers. Into this region of darkness, and the shadow of death, the light of the Gospel was sent, and the Holy Spirit of God descended to confer supernatural power upon twelve peasants of a despised race, destined to change the whole aspect of civilization; to teach self-denial and the stern logic of the cross to men sunk in self-indulgence and sensual ease; to teach the principles of universal brotherhood, and the virtues of forgiveness and love, to a cruel and hard-hearted race, nourished in indifference to suffering; to teach the proudest conquerors of the world to renounce the worship of the gods under whose fancied protection they had so often marched to victory, that they might accept in their stead a crucified Jew, and place their glory in that very cross which was the symbol of the uttermost indignity. Truly, the things which are impossible with men are possible with God.

It was the great day of Pentecost A.D. 30, and the courts of the Temple of Jerusalem, so soon to be deserted, were crowded with worshippers. The firstfruits of the early harvest were to be presented on the altar, typical of the firstfruits of a mightier harvest that day to be presented to God.

In the stillness of the upper chamber, where the twelve



were gathered together, the sound as of a rushing mighty wind heralded the approach of the Lord and Giver of life. The news spread throughout the city of Zion that the followers of the despised Galilæan had been endowed with marvellous gifts of speech and language. Flocking to hear and see for themselves, the Holy Spirit spake through the voice of S. Peter to their hearts, and three thousand were converted and baptized, the nucleus of the Church.

At this momentous epoch the city was yet filled with persons who, little more than fifty days before, had raised the cry for the crucifixion of the Son of God; and the parting charge of their glorified Victim, before leaving the world which, so far as it could, had rejected Him, had been that His followers should preach repentance and remission of sins to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. Hence it has been a pious tradition, that many who took actual part in the crowning act of the great sacrifice were amongst the earliest fruits of the Apostolic labours.

Jewish colonists from all nations had come up to keep the feast at Jerusalem—from the borders of the African deserts, from the banks of the Tigris or Euphrates, from the fair cities of the Mediterranean, from that mighty centre of civilization, the Imperial City—and in their own tongues, or rather those of the nations amongst whom they were born, they heard the message of the Gospel, and that that Jesus whom they had crucified was both Lord and Christ.

Hence, in spite of the opposition of the Jewish rulers, the number of the faithful was increased by the baptism

of three thousand converts, and by the rapid progress of conversions consequent upon that marvellous outpouring of grace.

The feeling of the Jewish leaders towards the new-born faith was one of bitter hostility; and perhaps it is hard for us to realize the patriotism which united with bigotry and fanaticism to produce this unhappy result. Their political independence was gone; the glories of their later kings, the Asmonean dynasty, had faded away, and the last traces of national government had disappeared with the half alien family of Herod. Deeply feeling this degradation, they had but one centre of national unity to which to cling, the Mosaic dispensation. While this had its hold on the hearts of the people, the Jew could despise Greek and Roman alike; for was not he a member of the peculiar people whom God had chosen to be His own possession? Deeply as Israel was degraded beneath the iron heel of Rome, yet each Israelite believed that sooner or later the promised Messiah would appear, conquering and to conquer, and would rule the nations with a rod of iron. Then the insult and scorn of the Roman, or the sarcastic contempt of the Greek, would be repaid; then each Israelite might, like the followers of Joshua, set his feet upon the necks of kings.

To doubt this glorious future of his race was an act of apostasy; it was to doubt the God who had led His people through the Red Sea into the land of promise, and who would, in His own time, accomplish their destiny.

Christianity was the death-blow to all this, and when a Hebrew embraced the new revelation, he threw aside all

which had exalted him above the stranger and alien, to take his place as a mere unit in the universal brotherhood, side by side with Roman or Greek.

Hence those fanatical outbursts which from time to time testified to the strength of these feelings; hence the maddened rush of the people when they dragged S. Stephen to die without the gate, and stoned him to death as a blasphemer and a traitor to his people and his God. And on a later occasion, when he who held the clothes of the witnesses, and consented to the death of the first martyr, stood in his turn to testify of the mighty power of divine truth, they heard his defence in patience, until he came to the words wherein he announced his mission to the Gentiles, and then they threw dust into the air, and cried, "Away with such a fellow from the earth; for it is not fit that he should live!"

In the light of the considerations just placed before the reader, the earlier life of S. Paul is easily understood, and the marvellous grace, which rendered the persecutor an Apostle of the faith he once persecuted, becomes yet more marvellous.

While intent upon the destruction of the Christians, whom he not unnaturally regarded as traitors to their nation and blasphemers of their God, with the fiery zeal of a Phinehas; the Crucified One, whose flock he sought to ravage, revealed the truth to his blinded vision. Words utterly fail to express the conflict which must have raged in his mind during the three days of darkness which succeeded. The whole world of thought and belief had to be changed; every tradition of his childhood and youth to be

read anew, patriotism, the love of *kindred*—all to become as dross that he might win Christ.

It is evident that the most devoted Christians amongst the Jews shared the feelings of their nation, and yielded equality of religious position to the Gentiles with great reluctance. This becomes particularly evident in the case of the conversion of Cornelius and his household, who were the firstfruits of the Gentile world. The vision of the clean and the unclean, whereby S. Peter was admonished that he was no longer to account that common which God had cleansed; the application of that vision in his speech to Cornelius and his household; the outpouring of the Spirit before Baptism, whereby the Apostle was led to exclaim, "Can any man *forbid* water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?" the rebukes of the brethren who accused S. Peter of having gone in to men uncircumcised;—all show that the exclusive feelings of the Jews needed the evidence of visions and miracles before they yielded even in the hearts of those who had been told that they must be witnesses, not only in Jerusalem and Samaria, but "unto the ends of the earth."

But at this earlier period it was commonly supposed by the brethren that Christianity was to be engrafted on the Jewish dispensation, supplementing its defects, indeed, by the law of love, but still not exonerating its professors, whether Jew or Gentile, from their allegiance to the law of Moses. They had yet to learn that the Gentiles were not merely to be freely admitted to the Christian covenant as equals, but that the peculiar worship which had its

centre at Jerusalem was destined utterly to vanish from the earth; that its rites and sacrifices were for ever superseded when that last cry was uttered on Calvary, "It is finished!"

On the river Orontes, not far from the sea, stood the mighty city of Antioch, founded by Antiochus, the great persecutor of the Jews, three centuries earlier, and now, under Roman rule, one of the most important cities of the East, containing a population of some two or three hundred thousand inhabitants.

It was the great centre of Eastern commerce, and traders started daily by the desert routes for the remote cities of the East, or by sea to carry tropical produce to northern and western lands. Caravans for the countries beyond the Euphrates, bearing supplies to the distant Roman garrisons, took their departure, while the merchandise of Rome or Alexandria came by sea to Seleucia, and ascended the river thirty miles to the quays of the city.

In this centre of commercial and political life, whence the message of the Gospel might be readily diffused to the ends of the earth, the disciples who had been driven northward by the persecution under Herod Agrippa congregated, and probably S. Peter was amongst them. The multitude of the faithful attracted the notice of the world, and the disciples were first called Christians at Antioch.

Here, while the Church thus assembled gave itself to special Eucharistic celebrations,<sup>2</sup> and to fasting and prayer, a memorable event occurred. The Holy Spirit

<sup>2</sup> Note A.

by special revelation directed the consecration of S. Paul and S. Barnabas to the work of the Apostolate, and after receiving the solemn imposition of hands, they departed upon the first mission to the Gentile world.

Going overland to Seleucia, they took ship for Cyprus, where the Roman Governor, Sergius Paulus, was converted; and S. Paul, hitherto called Saul, assumed the designation by which he was ever afterwards known. From thence they sailed to the mainland, and traversed Pamphylia and Pisidia. At Antioch, in the latter province, they delivered their message, as usual, to the Jews; but when they would not heed, they turned to the Gentiles, who received the Word gladly.

Similar conversions gladdened the heart of the Apostles at Iconium. At Lystra they reached a population wholly composed of Gentiles, where they boldly declared the message of salvation to those whose minds had never received the precious preparation afforded by the Jewish dispensation, prefacing their declaration by an exercise of those miraculous powers the Holy Spirit had conferred upon them—in the healing of a cripple, lame from his mother's womb.

The Jews were most indignant at this conduct, which seemed a total departure from the national policy, and pursued the Apostles with unrelenting hatred, causing the multitude at Lystra to stone the men they had at first received as gods. Continuing their missionary journey to Derbe, they retraced their path, visiting each place where they had previously effected conversions, and, confirming their disciples, they ordained "elders" or priests, to whom

they committed the pastoral charge of their converts in the newly-formed Churches. Retracing their steps to the sea coast, they set sail for Antioch, where they declared to the assembled Church the great work God had accomplished through their ministry amongst the Gentiles.

The wonderful success of this mission, and the large number of Gentile converts, forced the discussion of the great question upon the Apostles—"Were the Gentile converts to be circumcised, and to be required to observe the obligations of the olden dispensation, or were they simply bound by the Gospel law of liberty and love?" in other words, "Was Christianity to exist as an independent religion, or simply as an adjunct to the Mosaical dispensation?"

The brethren in Antioch had apparently received the baptized, but uncircumcised, Gentiles without question; but certain brethren who came from Jerusalem taught them, saying, "Except ye be circumcised, and keep the law of Moses, ye cannot be saved."

To settle this important question, S. Paul and S. Barnabas were deputed to go up to Jerusalem to obtain the decision of the Apostles and Elders on this important question. After S. Peter had spoken in the cause of Christian liberty, and S. Paul and S. Barnabas had related the work God had accomplished amongst the Gentiles, S. James, as president of the council and bishop of Jerusalem, pronounced the momentous decision—momentous, as affecting the whole future of Christianity—that it seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to them to lay no

greater burden upon the Gentile converts than that they should abstain from things offered to idols, from partaking of the blood of slaughtered animals, from things strangled, and from the great sin of the Gentile world, fornication.

The prohibition of blood and of things strangled was necessary, if there was to be brotherly intercourse, involving the participation in common meals, between the Jewish and Gentile Christians, since such abstinence was strictly enjoined by the Mosaical law.

The Apostolic messengers returned with the glad tidings of the decision of the council to Antioch, and the effect of the decision was manifest in the rapid multiplication of Gentile Churches.

Shortly afterwards S. Peter arrived in Antioch, when, as we read in the Epistle to the Galatians, he ate and drank with the Gentile converts, until certain brethren came from Jerusalem, under whose influence he was led to act contrary to the spirit of the decisions of the council, and to withdraw himself from the uncircumcised brethren. S. Paul was still in Antioch, and following the impulse of his earnest piety, he did not hesitate to withstand the older Apostle to the face, "because he was to be blamed." Yet it is evident that the circumcised believers still manifested great reluctance to hold communion with the uncircumcised, so that many of them disparaged S. Paul and his teaching, and stirred up strife and contention in the Churches he had formed, as we learn from repeated allusions in the Epistles.

S. Paul now proposed to his former colleague S. Barnabas to revisit the Churches they had founded in Asia Minor;



but disagreeing about the expediency of taking S. Mark with them, who had deserted them on their former journey, being terrified by the dangers of the road, the contention became so sore that they finally separated.

S. Barnabas took S. Mark, and sailed again for Cyprus; S. Paul traversed Syria and Cilicia, his native land, arriving in this way at the scenes of his earlier labours.

At Lystra, where he had previously been stoned, S. Paul found a young disciple named Timothy, who had known the Scriptures from his youth, and was well reported of by the brethren. His mother was a Jewess, and a believer; but his father was a Greek, and Timothy was therefore uncircumcised. S. Paul associated the young disciple with him in his labours, previously circumcising him, as otherwise he would have obtained no hearing from the Jews; and the Apostle, persuaded that circumcision was nothing, and uncircumcision nothing, was simply guided by expediency.

After successful labours amongst the Galatians and Phrygians, they arrived at Troas, whence S. Paul was summoned by a vision to commence the mighty task of the evangelization of Europe, and during the following week first touched European soil at Philippi.

The mighty dimensions the Church was hereafter to assume were now becoming dimly apparent.

Brought into conflict with the civil power at Philippi, where S. Paul first claimed the rights of Roman citizenship, with the elegant philosophy of Greece at Athens, with the deadly vices of the heathen world at Corinth, in each instance the power of the Cross rose triumphant over opposition.

As yet the opposition from the civil power was very slight, although so shortly to become deadly ; and it appears in each instance to have proceeded, not from the heathen world, but from the animosity of the Jews, who ascribed a political object to the visit of the missionaries ; and the conduct of Gallio, the deputy of Achaia, may be accepted as a general instance of the indifference with which the Roman world was at first disposed to look upon a matter which they simply regarded as a schism in the Jewish community, whose pretensions they despised.

But the scene at Athens, when the Athenians arraigned the Apostle upon Mars' Hill, before the venerable council of the Areopagus, was indeed a striking one.

The new-born faith here came into contact with the noblest relic of the palmy days of Greece—the court of three hundred judges, which had such a repute for wisdom and justice, that it was customary to allege that during the thousand years of its existence it never gave an unjust decision. Its sittings were held in the open air, as in the more immediate presence of the Supreme Being, and at night, lest the judges should be moved by the visible emotion of the prisoner. Before these men the unknown stranger stood, with his message from the unseen world ; *there*, surrounded by all the matchless works of art which immortalized that famous hill, he rebuked the superstition of polytheism. Yet so indifferent had mankind become to the honour of their imaginary deities, that no one raised his voice in rebuke ; but when he asserted the resurrection of the dead, even the stern gravity of the court seemed overcome, and unwonted sounds of laughter greeted the

solemn announcement, which Athens then mocked, but Europe has now received.

The immortality of the soul was indeed an open question amongst them; but the resurrection of the flesh seemed so utterly contrary to all that experience had taught them, that the bearer of the message of God was dismissed with contempt. Nevertheless, Dionysius, one of the judges, was converted by that oration, and it is said that he became the first bishop of Athens.

But the chief scene of the labours of the Apostle during his second missionary journey was Corinth—like Antioch, a great commercial emporium—situated on an isthmus between two seas, and exceedingly populous. Here the Lord whom he served appeared to him in a vision, saying, “I have much people in this city;” and although the Jews opposed and blasphemed, so that he was forced to withdraw himself entirely from the worship of the synagogue, yet he continued a year and six months, during which he founded the Church which became the centre of the Christianity of Greece. This lengthened stay was probably caused by the great opposition Christianity had to encounter, both from the subtleties of the heathen philosophy, and the unbounded profligacy for which Corinth was notorious. The Jews in vain endeavoured to check the progress of the faith by the appeal to Gallio, to which we have already alluded. They were driven with ignominy from the judgment seat; for “Gallio cared for none of those things.” Shortly afterwards S. Paul left Corinth, and returning to Antioch, after a short visit to Ephesus, completed this eventful missionary journey.

It was but a short time before the indefatigable Apostle, whose burning zeal and love for the Master he had once persecuted never suffered him to rest, commenced his third missionary journey, and the chief seat of his labours on this occasion was Ephesus, the great city sacred to the worship of the heathen goddess Diana, where the famous temple, rightly reckoned amongst the wonders of the world, existed in unrivalled majesty.

The whole city was utterly given over to idolatry; her craftsmen gained their riches by making silver images and shrines for Diana, her learned men were deeply read in the heathen mysteries and in magical arts, yet even here Satan was unable to protect his stronghold: multitudes listened to the inspired voice of the Apostle, and renounced their misbelief. They confessed their deeds, they burnt their magical books, even to the value of fifty thousand pieces of silver: "so mightily grew the Word of God, and prevailed."

But after three full years, the craftsmen, perceiving that the hope of their gains had gone in proportion as the teaching of S. Paul had prevailed, raised a riot amongst the unbelievers, which threatened the peace of the city. The loud shout, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians," echoed from the mighty amphitheatre; and yet Diana had been conquered, her worship had received its death-wound, slow although the process of death may have seemed to the ardent Christians; and we shall be called upon in the course of this history to contemplate similar Ephesian enthusiasm in the cause of the faith then despised.

After revisiting his disciples in Greece and Macedonia,

S. Paul returned by slow stages to Jerusalem. Passing by Miletus, he sent for the clergy of the Church of Ephesus, and delivered a most solemn farewell address and pastoral charge.

Returning to Jerusalem, while in deference to the wishes of S. James, the bishop of Jerusalem, he was complying with those national rites which he regarded as useless but harmless, the long pent-up fury of his countrymen broke out, and he was with difficulty rescued from their violence by the Roman soldiery. Appealing to his privileges as a Roman citizen, he was spared the indignity to which he would otherwise have been subjected, and after a long imprisonment, appealing to Cæsar, he was sent to Rome. The well-known story of his voyage and shipwreck needs no recapitulation.

Rome was at the zenith of her greatness when the inspired Apostle approached her by the Appian way—a prisoner, unheeded by the careless throng, who little thought of the mighty change which should hereafter cause his advent to be regarded as one of the most important epochs in the history, not only of the imperial city, but of the world.

The brethren came to meet him, and their sympathy cheered his heart. As usual, he first proclaimed his message to the Jews; but when they blasphemed, he shook his raiment, and turned his whole attention to the conversion of the Gentiles, amongst whom his labours were, as usual, singularly blessed.

Thus he dwelt a prisoner for two whole years in his hired house, chained probably to the soldier who had

charge of him, and here the inspired record contained in "The Acts of the Apostles" leaves him.

But we have authentic traditions concerning the further career of this eminent servant of God. After an imprisonment of two years, he was released as one innocent of any crime or political offence, and during the following five years he continued his Apostolical labours.

In the first instance he preached the Gospel, as S. Clement, his fellow labourer, informs us, even to the uttermost bounds of the West—by which expression Spain is certainly indicated, and perhaps even the British Isles—of which he might have learned from captives at Rome. Claudia, a British lady and wife of Pudens, a Roman senator, is particularly mentioned in his Epistles.

Thence he appears to have returned from the West to Rome on his way to Jerusalem, probably in company with Timothy. After his visit to Jerusalem, he, perhaps, performed his promise to visit Philemon at Colosse, in Phrygia; and on his way thence to Macedonia he seems to have left Timothy at Ephesus as its bishop and chief pastor, as he had before left Titus at Crete with a similar commission.

They were charged to ordain priests or elders in each city, and to exercise the general supervision of the Church in their respective dioceses—the one the most polished city of Asia, the other the half-savage island of Crete. The prerogatives of the Apostolate were not committed to them, but the ordinary functions of a bishop, as we understand the word in these modern days, with the power of transmitting the gift which was in them by the laying on of hands. It is not probable that S. Paul actually visited

Ephesus in person. He had, indeed, expressly foretold at Miletus that the faithful of that city should behold his face no more; and probably he would but have courted the fate which, in God's own time, actually befell him, had he entered its walls. He journeyed westward, passing through Macedonia to Nicopolis, in Epirus, where he appears to have spent the winter, and thence again journeyed eastward, leaving Erastus at Corinth, and Trophimus sick at Miletus. Here we should infer he saw Timothy, and was probably arrested in the neighbourhood by order of the imperial government, and sent as a prisoner to Rome, where a fearful persecution had commenced, as we shall presently relate.

On the way they touched at Troas, where the prisoner left his books and parchments, and finally, after a toilsome overland journey, he reached the final goal of his labours—Rome—by the Egnatian way.

Nero was at that time Emperor of Rome, a man whose atrocious crimes have procured him an unenviable immortality. Beginning his reign at the early age of seventeen, he seemed at first to give evidence of a merciful disposition, and of great literary ability. He appeared, indeed, so humane that, when a warrant for the execution of a criminal was brought to him, he is said to have exclaimed, "Would I had never learned to write." Fond of music, skilful in poetry and the fine arts, he began his reign amidst general approbation. But he is an awful instance of the powerlessness of civilization, apart from Christianity, to soften the heart, and of the deadly evil which unbounded power may work upon a

disposition which, under ordinary circumstances, might have been unfruitful in evil. Probably, had Nero been placed under influences such as those which form modern society, he would never have been otherwise remarkable than as an eccentric but somewhat gifted man, fond of the fine arts, and skilful in their exercise; yet the possession of unlimited powers of evil rendered him a terror to mankind, and a disgrace to our common nature.

"He left a name at which the world grew pale,  
To point a moral or adorn a tale."

He began his iniquities with the murder of his mother; and, inspired with lust of blood, was guilty of such terrible cruelties, that even the men of that degraded age shrank with horror.

We are informed that about the year A.D. 65 he conceived a desire to behold a conflagration on a large scale, such as he had read of in the second book of Virgil, which describes the destruction of Troy. To gratify this desire he caused a large portion of the city to be set on fire. Of the fourteen quarters into which it was divided, only four escaped; and it was asserted that while it was burning he ascended the tower of Mæcenas in an actor's dress, and sang the verses of the poet which had fired his imagination.

A universal cry of execration was raised, and, to escape the danger of a rebellion, he charged the crime upon the Christians, just then becoming objects of notoriety at Rome, and, alas! abhorred for their austere virtue. The remarks of the historian Tacitus may give the sequel:

"To put an end, therefore, to the report, he (Nero) laid



the guilt, and inflicted the punishment, upon a set of people who were holden in abhorrence for their offences, and called by the vulgar, Christians.

"The founder of the sect was Christ, who suffered death in the reign of Tiberius, under the procurator Pontius Pilate. This pernicious superstition, thus checked for awhile, broke out again, and spread not only over Judæa, where the evil originated, but through Rome also, whither everything bad upon the earth finds its way, and is practised.

"Some who confessed their sect were at first seized, and afterwards by their information a vast multitude were apprehended, who were convicted, not so much of burning Rome, as of hatred to mankind. Their sufferings at their execution were aggravated by insult and mockery; for some were disguised in the skins of wild beasts, and worried to death by dogs; some were crucified; and others were wrapped in pitched shirts, and set on fire when the day closed, that they might serve as lights to illuminate the night.

"Nero lent his own gardens for these executions, and exhibited at the same time a mock Circensian entertainment, being a spectator of the scene in the dress of a charioteer, sometimes mingling with the crowd on foot, and sometimes viewing the spectacle from his car. This conduct made the sufferers pitied; and though they were criminals, and deserving of the severest punishments, yet they were considered as sacrificed, not so much for the public good, as to gratify the cruelty of one man." \*

\* Paley's translation.

Such is the narrative of Tacitus; and the reader will perceive that the blameless and devoted followers of the Lord were already spoken of as "evil doers." We shall consider in a future chapter the reasons of this sad misapprehension, which seemed to the heathen to palliate the most atrocious cruelties inflicted upon their unfortunate victims, if indeed they can be called unfortunate, whose blood became the seed of the Church, and whose sufferings have long since been recompensed by a far more exceeding weight of glory.

We have seen that S. Paul was arrested near Miletus, and thence conveyed to Rome. S. Luke, his constant companion, was with him; but Demas and others forsook him, "having loved this present world," and terrified, probably, by the fearful scenes which were of daily occurrence around them. Arrived in Rome, his doom was quickly pronounced; but being a Roman citizen, he was spared the ignominious tortures inflicted upon his fellow-Christians: and it needed not this to testify his devotion to his Lord; for his whole life had been one of continued martyrdom, from the time when his beloved Master called him to take up his cross, and the persecutor became the Apostle.

And now the weary, self-denying life was nearly ended, and the tired mariner was entering the port, one more trial, a sharp one, but the last, awaited him. Yet who can doubt that those last days were days of vivid happiness? Many, indeed, had forsaken him. At the judgment-seat no man stood by him; but he had fought a good fight, he had finished his course, he had kept the faith, and the crown seemed within his very grasp.

In the ruins of Rome's ancient greatness the visitor may yet trace the scenes hallowed by his last footsteps upon earth, where they led him out from the city by the road leading to Ostia ; and at a place then known as the "Aguas Salvias," the headsman's stroke dismissed his happy soul to be for ever with the Lord.

S. Peter is said to have been his companion during a portion of this period ; and S. Jerome asserts that the two great Apostles were martyred on one and the same day. S. Peter is said to have been confined in the dreary Mamertine prison, little superior to the common sewer ; "a place of darkness and the lowest pit," where not one gleam of light could penetrate, in the very depths of the foundations of the gorgeous Capitoline hill. A touching legend is told of him which has often been the theme of the painter and the poet. It is said that, having converted his gaoler, that official, at the risk of his own life, set him free, and that he left the city by the Appian way, when in the moonlight he saw a figure approaching, and recognized his Divine Master, bearing his cross Romewards. "Lord, whither goest Thou ?" he is said to have exclaimed, and received the reply, "I go to Rome, to be crucified again," when the vision disappeared. S. Peter knew that He who once said, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou *Me*?" yet suffered mystically in His Elect, and he returned to his bonds.

Brought out at length to die the death of the cross, the aged Apostle besought that he might be crucified with his head downwards, since he said he was unworthy to die like his Master, Whom he had once denied. His request was granted.

It is probable that by this date (A.D. 68) nearly all the Apostles had glorified God by their deaths. S. Andrew had suffered in Achaia, being suspended from a cross in the form of the letter X, by order of the proconsul Egeas; S. Philip had been crucified at Hierapolis, in Phrygia; S. Bartholomew was said to have been flayed alive in the Greater Armenia; S. Matthew had disappeared in Ethiopia; S. Thomas had even penetrated the recesses of India, where, after founding a flourishing Church, he was put to death by the Brahmins; S. James the Less, whose death we shall presently relate, had suffered at Jerusalem; S. Simon and S. Jude are said to have suffered in Persia; S. Matthias had been crucified in Cappadocia; S. Barnabas, after overcoming the Jews of Cyprus in argument at Salamis, was shut up in their synagogue, and at night stoned to death.

Such are the commonly received traditions concerning the deaths of the Apostles, possessing more or less probability: they all, save S. John, followed their Lord over the Red sea of blood, conquering by suffering; but "their sound had gone out into all lands, and their words into the ends of the world."

## CHAPTER II.

### THE LATTER DAYS OF S. JOHN.

A.D. 68-100.

IT is commonly supposed that all the Apostles, save S. John, had been gathered to their rest when our blessed Lord's words received their striking fulfilment in the destruction of the guilty city which had rejected Him, and had stoned them which were sent unto her.

The crucifixion of their long-expected Messiah had indeed been followed by the most bitter and unrelenting hostility to all who bore His Name, and chiefly because they had not contented themselves with preaching the glad tidings of eternal life to their countrymen, but had bidden the *Gentiles* to the Gospel feast.

This was their unpardonable offence; for, sad to say, at this period of their history the chosen people bore a more peculiar hatred to all mankind beyond their own narrow sphere than did even the heathen Greek or Roman. They considered the future life, if indeed there were one, an inheritance reserved for the Jew, the seed of Abraham, and had no desire that in his seed all the families of the earth should be blessed; nay, it seems evident that they even exulted in the anticipation of the final destruction of the Gentile.

Hence it is hardly surprising that thus hating they were hated, and that in the day of their grievous calamity they found no pity, although surely such utter desolation had scarcely visited a nation before.

The Jews had now groaned under the Roman yoke for many years, a yoke peculiarly galling to men of their national characteristics.

Although they enjoyed full toleration, and their religious rites were protected by law, yet the very sight of the Roman legionary in the holy city was gall and wormwood to them. Often they had been on the verge of sanguinary outbreaks, often false Messiahs had promised to break the Roman yoke; but although the crisis had so frequently seemed at hand, yet the catastrophe had been hitherto averted.

It was under the rule of Festus that S. Paul left the Holy Land for Rome, escaping, under Roman protection, the plots of his infuriated countrymen. Eusebius informs us that in their rage they sought other victims, and found one in S. James the Less, kinsman of our Lord, and bishop of Jerusalem.

So well known was his piety that even the unbelieving Jews gave him the appellation of "Justus," and his influence was great amongst the multitude, as also amongst his brethren. Hegesippus informs us that he was in the habit of repairing to the temple, and there spending long hours of intercession for his brethren, until by length of kneeling his knees became hard as those of camels.

At the Passover A.D. 62, the Pharisees seized him, and placing him upon a pinnacle of the temple, required him

to disavow his Lord in the presence of the multitude who thronged its court, and to declare Him an impostor; whereupon the aged saint replied, "Why do you ask me concerning Jesus? He sitteth at the right hand of God, from whence He shall return to judge the quick and the dead."

A testimony so solemn startled the unbelievers; but, recovering their presence of mind and their ferocity, they cast him down from the pinnacle. He was not killed by the fall, but retained sufficient strength to pray for his murderers, and one of the priests, a son of the Rechabites, cried to the people who were stoning the fallen Apostle, "Cease! the just one is praying for you," when one of them, a fuller, beat out the brains of the victim with a club.

Even the Jewish historian, Josephus, partly attributes the calamities that followed to the Divine vengeance upon the slayers of this just man.

They were indeed years of gathering calamities which succeeded. The Roman governors grew more oppressive in their exactions; rebellions arose in all directions; false Messiahs deceived the people who had rejected the true One, saying, "Lo, here is Christ," or "Lo, there."

And marvellous prodigies are related by Josephus, signs in the heaven above and in the earth beneath, warning the unhappy people of the coming destruction.

We are told of a star, like a fiery sword, which hung over the city for a whole year; of apparitions in the air resembling soldiers who besieged cities; of the brazen gate of the temple opening of its own accord; and that on the night preceding the feast of Pentecost, when the

priests entered the temple to perform their duties, the earth quaked, the veil which shrouded the Holy of Holies was rent, and from behind the winged cherubim the sound as of a departing host was heard; while a voice issued from the mysterious darkness, "Let us depart hence."

But the state of political affairs was such that the probable end could be plainly discerned.

The last Roman governor of whom we read in Holy Writ was Festus. To him succeeded Albinus, who not only neglected the duties of his station, but sold permission to assassins and robbers to follow their profession, provided they shared the booty with him; so that no malefactor possessing money remained long in prison.

Albinus was at length removed from his post, and Florus succeeded—a man so infamous that his predecessor shone by comparison. He thought it (says Josephus) a small thing to ruin individuals, but spoiled whole cities, and brought the inhabitants of the land into the greatest distress by his extortions and robberies.

Once the people sent deputies to Antioch to appeal to Cestius Gallus, the governor of Syria, of whom Florus was a subordinate; but Florus, who was a master of deceit, justified himself by lying, and returned as a rampant lion to Jerusalem.

The fact was this. He had so deeply committed himself that he knew ruin would await an investigation into his crimes at Rome; for there was always an appeal to the authorities there, so long as no open act of rebellion had been committed. When once this limit was passed, Rome



would listen to no appeal, in her determination to crush insubordination. Consequently, the manifest interest of Florus was to drive the Jews into open rebellion.

And he succeeded. There was a dispute between the Jews and Greeks at Cæsarea. The Greeks built walls to obstruct the way to the synagogue. The Jews gave Florus eight talents to hinder the builders. He took the talents, and paid no further attention to the matter. The Jews broke into open sedition, and sent a deputation, which he threw into prison.

The people at Jerusalem, taking the part of their brethren, were greatly enraged, and, to increase their indignation, Florus sent soldiers to the Temple, and seized a large portion of the treasure dedicated to God, under the pretence that Cæsar required it.

In their indignation, certain people disguised themselves as beggars, and went about the city with baskets, begging for Florus as for one in miserable want. He revenged this ill-timed pleasantry by repairing in person to Jerusalem, and requiring those who had thus mocked him to be delivered up for execution.

The high priest and the elders of the people besought him to pardon the offence in vain. No submission appeased him; and failing to discover the offenders, he pointed out a portion of the city to his soldiers, telling them to plunder it, and slay all whom they met.

An inhuman massacre ensued. Even infants were not spared. Three or four thousand of all ages were slain; and in brutal sport the soldiers seized some of the fugitives and actually crucified them.

Still the people submitted, at the earnest entreaty of their leaders, and Florus found he must have recourse to even greater iniquities.

He sent for the priests, and told them that the people must prove their submission by going out in procession to welcome his soldiers as they came from Cæsarea, meanwhile sending private instructions to the military how to act.

The procession started, the priests and Levites heading it, the harpers and singers following with the multitudes in their holiday attire, when the horsemen charged them, trampled them down, and drove them through the gates. Numbers were slain or crushed in the press, and the whole city was filled with mourning.

But the cup was full. The Jews seized their weapons, attacked the soldiers, and drove them out of the city. Florus himself fled to Cæsarea.

Cestius Gallus had his suspicions of Florus, and before taking any steps sent Agrippa, the king who was almost persuaded to be a Christian, to enquire into the matter and appease the Jews.

He came, and in a long and eloquent oration, still preserved to us, pointed out the utter hopelessness of opposition to Rome, and besought his countrymen to receive Florus till an appeal could be prosecuted before Cæsar; but the multitude broke into indignation at the very mention of the name, cast stones at Agrippa, drove him from the city, and attacked the Roman garrison, who surrendered on promise of quarter, but were instantly slaughtered in cold blood. It was the Sabbath-day.

There was still a large party desirous of peace ; but the war-party was the stronger, and put their adversaries, including the high priest and his brother, to death, as traitors to their country and friends to Rome.

The die was cast. Henceforward there was but one possible issue to the struggle, and the Jews prepared for the desperate struggle, appointing military governors for all the provinces, amongst whom was Josephus, the historian of the war.

When the news of the rebellion reached the other cities of the empire, the inhabitants rose upon the Jews resident amongst them, and murdered them in cold blood ; thus twenty thousand were slain at Cæsarea, and fifty thousand at Alexandria. In all districts the reign of terror had begun.

The war commenced favourably for the Jews. Cestius invaded Judæa with an insufficient force, was utterly defeated, and fled to Antioch, leaving behind him all his military stores and engines of war. The Jews thought that God had appeared for them, and imagined that they were destined to see the hosts of Rome perish as the hosts of Pharaoh or of Sennacherib.

It was at this juncture that, seeing Jerusalem encompassed by armies, and knowing that the end must be nigh, the last remnant of the Christians fled from the city at a moment when the fanatical Jews were in full anticipation of triumph, and took refuge at a little town beyond the Jordan, called Pella.

We cannot linger over the details of the bloody war that ensued, but must briefly enumerate them. From all

parts of the empire the Jews flocked to the aid of their brethren; they occupied the forts and passes of the land, and awaited the coming shock. It came. Nero, who was greatly alarmed lest so successful an example should be followed by other countries, sent Vespasian, an old general of great ability, to Judæa, with a formidable army, inferior in numbers, but far superior in discipline, to the forces of the Jews. City after city fell. Galilee became one huge battle-field. The blue lake of Tiberias, upon which our Lord had so often sailed, was defiled with the blood of the slain.

The unhappy survivors of the war in Galilee were driven before the Roman armies towards Jerusalem, to increase the miseries of the already over-crowded population assembled there to await the final issue of the war. But as if the miseries of war were insufficient in themselves for the punishment of the guilty people, the most bitter internal dissensions arose. Bands of robbers, called Zealots, took possession of the Temple as a fortress, profaning the Holy of Holies by their presence. One John of Gischala, who, by the aid of treachery, had escaped the Romans in Galilee, came with his adherents to increase the confusion, and the two parties together admitted the Idumæans into the city, when a most bloody massacre ensued. The High Priest and all his adherents were slain, and from that period, until all was ended by the capture of the city, internal government was at an end, robbers and murderers scoured the streets and fought openly for their prey. John gained possession of the Temple; Simon the son of Gioras occupied the city; and soon a third faction, headed by one Eleazar, revolting from

John, occupied the upper parts of the Temple, and waged incessant war, while the peaceful inhabitants were the sport and prey of each faction.

Thus low had the city fallen, of which it was once said, "Jerusalem is built as a city that is at unity in itself;" and the peaceful inhabitants who yet remained prayed for the arrival of the Romans, not foreseeing that that arrival would simply add the horrors of plague and famine to those of bloodshed and anarchy.

The Romans meanwhile, crushing all opposition, were steadily advancing upon the doomed city.

Important events at Rome now recalled Vespasian homewards. Nero had paid the penalty of his crimes against the human race.

Sergius Galba, the governor of Spain, had risen to deliver his country from the monster who misruled it. The news reached Nero when he was at supper. Like most cruel men, he was a coward. Struck with terror, he fell into a swoon, and overturned the supper-table. Recovering, he called for the means of poisoning himself; but failing to obtain them, and the revolt becoming general, he sought refuge in a country house four miles distant, where the pursuers found him. Hearing their approach, he plunged a dagger into his throat and died. Galba was murdered by the soldiers. Otho succeeded; and being opposed by Vitellius, committed suicide. Vitellius, infamous for his gluttony, reigned in riot and debauchery, until Vespasian arrived with the legions of the East, when the army slew him with all possible ignominy, and proclaimed Vespasian emperor.

Leaving his son Titus the command of the army which was destined to besiege Jerusalem, he repaired to Rome, and, amidst the acclamations of the senate and people, ascended the imperial throne.

During the feast of the Passover A.D. 70, Titus, having crushed resistance elsewhere, appeared before Jerusalem.

The city was surrounded on every side by three walls. Titus battered down the outer one, and in five days the inner one shared the same fate. Only one line of defence remained; but so desperate was the resistance of the besieged, that it was determined to surround the city by a trench, and to leave famine and disease to do their work.

All hope of escape was now cut off from the Jews. They were shut in with death in its most loathsome forms; the famine became unendurable; starvation with its utmost horrors was upon them; to possess food was to tempt the dagger of the robber; even the prophecy of Moses was fulfilled, that the tender and delicate woman should eat the flesh of the child of her womb.

The upper rooms were filled with expiring women and children; the lanes and streets were obstructed by dead bodies; men wandered about like spectres, and fell dead in the public places. As for burial, the sick could not assist, the strong were few, and the corpses numerous: the dead remained unburied.

A deep silence reigned over the whole city, save where robbers and assassins sought their prey; and yet the deluded people still fondly looked for the Messiah of their own imaginations. "When the night is darkest, dawn is near," they said; and from their beds of pain and woe,

from the stricken streets of the city, or its crumbling ramparts, they fondly looked each successive dawn to see the glory of the coming Deliverer burst over the Eastern hills.

Even the Zealots, the assassins and robbers, looked fondly for help to Him Who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity; while yet the blood of the innocent cried against them from the ground, they wearied heaven by prayer.

The abomination of desolation had long reigned in the Holy Place. It was the haunt of iniquity and crime; the daily sacrifice had ceased.

At length the third wall was broken down, and the Romans entered the citadel.

The fury of the battle now gathered around the inner wall of the Temple, while the Jews fought fiercely from its battlements, hurling down missiles of every description.

Titus wished to spare that beautiful building; but a stronger arm than his was warring against it. A solitary firebrand cast through a window by a soldier kindled the cedarwood; the flames rose rapidly; one universal cry of horror burst from the Jews as they beheld them; the very dying forgot their own misery as they gazed upon the burning Temple, and felt that God had indeed deserted them. They lifted up their expiring eyes, and, oblivious of their approaching dissolution, mourned for the departing glory of their nation.

Still, however, the most resolute amongst the Jews defended the upper and stronger part of the city, known as the hill of Zion; but Titus soon made himself its master by the aid of the battering-ram.

John and Simon, the leaders of the insurgents in this

last desperate struggle, were taken prisoners, and the greater part of the survivors put to the sword.

Josephus computes the number of those who perished in the siege at 1,100,000, and of the prisoners at 97,000. Of the latter those under seventeen were sold for slaves, and the rest sent to supply living material for the amphitheatres, to die by the wild beast, the sword, or scourge. Many were sent to that Egypt, from which their forefathers had once so gloriously emerged, to labour in the stone quarries for life.

The city itself was entirely destroyed; so that, according to the prophecy of our Lord, not one stone remained upon another, and the site was ploughed up.

Such was the end of the Mosaical worship and ritual, after an existence of more than fifteen centuries; and we have dwelt upon it as an event of the utmost importance in the history of the Church.

Before the fall of Jerusalem, Jewish Christians combined the ancient worship with the simpler rites of the new dispensation; but now God had distinctly interposed to remove the older ritual from the face of the earth. Its sacrifices could no longer be offered, nor its rites performed.

Before the Incarnation its rites were binding and *salutary*; from the consummation of the one great Atonement until the destruction of the Temple *harmless*, and as such observed, as we have seen, even by S. Paul; but after that event *deadly*, as implying that trust in circumcision so severely condemned by the great Apostle of the Gentiles.

It is probable, as we have already remarked, that by the time of the destruction of the city most of the Apostles



had entered upon their eternal rest—perhaps *all* excepting S. John, to whom it was reserved to minister to a generation educated from infancy in the faith, and to complete, by his hallowed writings, the written revelation of God's word to man.

Eusebius informs us that immediately after the final destruction of the ancient worship, all the disciples and kinsfolk of our Lord yet surviving came together to hold consultation upon the future organization of the Church. They appointed Simeon, the son of Cleophas, to succeed S. James as Bishop of the Jewish Christians—who, as we have seen, had fled to Pella—with the title, so dear to them, of Bishop of Jerusalem; and it is supposed, on collateral testimony, that the charge of organization was fitly undertaken by S. John, the sole survivor of the three who had alike witnessed the Transfiguration and the Agony.

During the earlier years of the Apostolic Church, his labours had been less conspicuous than those of many other Apostles, probably because he was quietly fulfilling the last sacred charge committed to him from the Cross, and discharging the duties of a son to the Blessed Virgin. Subsequently he appears to have laboured for a time amongst the Parthians, who had succeeded to the empire of Persia in the East, and who were friendly towards both Jews and Christians.

After the martyrdom of S. Paul, S. Timothy returned to Ephesus, where he was cruelly put to death during a celebration in honour of Diana, and the Churches of Asia Minor were left without a recognized leader. S. John, as if obeying a Divine call, left the East, and repaired at once

to Ephesus, where he assumed the chief direction of the "Seven Churches."

The years succeeding the fall of Jerusalem were years of peace and quietness to the infant Church, only disturbed by the early attempts of the Gnostics to engraft their system upon Christianity. These false teachers (of whom we shall speak at length hereafter) taught that our Blessed Lord was a mere man, upon whom a Heavenly Being, the "Æon" Christ, descended at His baptism, to abide during his ministry, and to desert Him before His crucifixion. On one occasion S. John met Cerinthus—a well-known Gnostic teacher—in the public baths of the city, and rushed from the building lest, as he is reported to have said, the roof should fall in upon the enemy of God and man.

Many passages in his Epistles and Gospel bear especial reference to these heretical tenets; notably the opening verses of the Gospel, wherein the pre-existence and divinity of our Lord, and the doctrine of the Incarnation, are set forth in opposition to the Gnostic doctrines.

Nine years after the fall of Jerusalem, Vespasian died in peace, the only Cæsar who was permitted to bequeath his empire to his sons; and Titus, well named the delight of the human race, so remarkable in a heathen were his virtues, succeeded him; but his reign was of short continuance: he died in the third year, and was succeeded by his brother, the wicked and cruel Domitian.

Under this monster, whose terrible cruelties startled even the hardened Romans, the persecuting edicts of Nero were put in force against the faithful, and the Second Persecution took place.

S. John was arrested at Ephesus, and banished to the desert isle of Patmos; and here we must not omit to notice the tradition commemorated in the Anglican Calendar, on the sixth of May, under the title, "S. John ante Portam Latinam." It is said that, previously to his banishment, Domitian ordered the Apostle to be lowered into a caldron of boiling oil, outside the Latin Gate of the Imperial City, and that he emerged unhurt, whereupon the tyrant banished him to Patmos. There, on that desert island, he was in spirit on the Lord's Day, and saw the heavens opened before him, with the Master, Whom he had loved, in glory; whereupon he fell at His feet as one dead. There he received from his Lord the messages to the Angels or Bishops of the Seven Churches. There the heavenly worship was exhibited before him, a pattern upon which the ritual of the Christian Church was founded, as that of the Jewish Church had been upon the pattern shown unto Moses in the mount. There fearful mysteries, foreshadowing the future of the Church and of the world, were revealed to him, extending from his own days to those when the Victim of Calvary shall sit upon the Great White Throne, to judge both the quick and the dead.

The victims of the Second Persecution were few in number. Flavius Clemens, the cousin of the emperor, and the consul, Acilius Glabrio, were accused of atheism, by which charge was meant non-conformity to the rites established by the state and of Judaizing; for the Christians were yet regarded by the heathen as a Jewish sect. Acilius, who was strong and active, was sentenced to fight

with wild beasts in the amphitheatre, and he overcame them; yet this did not save his life. He was sent into exile, and put to death during his banishment. Flavius Clemens was put to death immediately upon conviction, and his wife and children banished to a desert island, where they probably died; for nothing further is known concerning them.

The suspicious and jealous character of Domitian is strikingly shown by his behaviour towards the grandchildren of S. Jude, who were reported to him as being of the house and lineage of David. Ordering them to be led before him, he asked them whether they were of royal descent, and they replied that they were. He further asked them of their property, and discovered, to his surprise, that their whole estate consisted of thirty-nine acres of land, which they cultivated with their own hands. When asked concerning Christ and His Kingdom, they replied that it was not an earthly, but a heavenly kingdom which they expected, which would not appear till the end of the world, when their Lord would come to judge the quick and the dead, and to render to every man according to his works. Upon which Domitian turned away, and disdained any further conversation, treating the brethren as simpletons. Thus escaping death, they returned in safety to their homes.

After Domitian had reigned fifteen years, his career was cut short by assassination, and the senate, loading his memory with reproaches, chose the gentle Nerva as his successor.

Nerva immediately revoked the persecuting edicts of

his predecessor; and the aged Apostle, leaving Patmos, returned to his beloved flock in Ephesus and its adjacent cities. A touching story of this latter period of his life is recorded by Eusebius, which we freely render.

“When the tyrant was dead, S. John came from the Isle of Patmos to Ephesus, and thence he was wont to travel amongst the Gentiles of the neighbouring regions, appointing bishops in some places, and founding entirely new Churches in others. On one of these occasions, when he had ordained a bishop, he was struck by the fine stature, fair countenance, and devout bearing of a youth amongst the brethren, and earnestly commended him to the care of the bishop, saying, ‘Him I commend to you in all earnestness in the presence of the Church and of Christ.’ The bishop, receiving the youth, promised to be to him all that the Apostle could desire, and, when S. John was gone, educated, restrained, cherished, and baptized him; after which he unhappily relaxed his care and vigilance, as if all were safe. But certain lewd fellows of the baser sort attached themselves to him, and led him first to dissolute and expensive entertainments; then to robbery, that they might supply the means for this indulgence; and so they went on together from crime to crime, till at last they were forced to flee the city, when he whom the Apostle had loved, surpassing the rest in violence and cruelty, formed them into a band of robbers, and became their captain and the terror of the neighbouring districts. After awhile S. John revisited the city, and when he had appointed and settled those matters whereon he came, he said, ‘And now, O bishop, return me the deposit which has been committed

to thee by Christ.' The bishop at first was confounded; but when the Apostle, persisting, said, "I demand the young man whose soul is precious as that of a brother," the bishop replied, 'He is dead.' 'How did he die?' replied the Apostle. 'He is dead to God; he has forsaken the Church, and become a robber and the captain of robbers.' Whereupon the Apostle, being grieved, rent his clothes, and sorely lamenting, said, 'O careless keeper, to whom I committed a soul for whom Christ died, let a guide who knows the mountain be sought.' So when neither prayers nor tears moved him, the Apostle, travelling with his guide to the mountain, fell into the hands of the robbers, to whom he said, 'Bring me to your captain; for this purpose have I come.' The captain in the meantime stood all armed to receive his prisoner; but when he saw and knew him, he attempted to flee. 'Dost thou flee,' cried the Apostle, 'from me, thy aged father? How wilt thou flee from thy Judge at the last day? Willingly would I die for thee. Stay; for Christ hath sent me.' And when he had heard this, the young man stopped with downcast looks, and, throwing away his weapons wherein he trusted, wept bitterly—baptized a second time with his own tears, and only concealing his right hand wherewith he had wrought wickedness. But the Apostle seizing that right hand and kissing it, as cleansed by the tears of repentance from all iniquity, led him back to the Church. Neither did he leave him until he had been fully forgiven by God and man, and restored to the communion of the faithful—an example of true repentance—and risen from the death of sin to the life of righteousness."

Such is this touching and beautiful legend borrowed by Eusebius from Clement of Alexandria. It is a fitting illustration of the life of the Apostle, whose eminent characteristic was love.

When at length he was manifestly declining in bodily vigour, his disciples besought him to leave behind an inspired record of all that he had seen and heard of the Lord of Life, in addition to the three Gospels they already possessed. There was indeed much necessity that the growth of error should thus be stopped in its birth; for the Gnostics, waxing bold, denied both the Incarnation and the Resurrection, while they yet accepted the Lord as a divinely-inspired Teacher; and the Docetæ, strangest of heretics, maintained that His human body was but a phantom, possessing no real existence, and that He had only seemed to eat, drink, and perform the ordinary functions of human life; hence His very death on the Cross had only been a mysterious delusion. When, therefore, all the bishops of Asia and delegates from every Church besought S. John to write for the confirmation of the faith and the confusion of heresy, he promised to comply, directing the observance of a solemn fast and supplication on the part of the Church for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

This desire accomplished, he seized his pen, and, filled with the Holy Ghost, began that marvellous commencement, "In the beginning was the Word."

It must be at once observed how completely his Gospel answers the heresies to which we have alluded, by its plain teaching upon the mysteries of the Incarnation, the Sacraments, and the events succeeding that Resurrection

which could have no place in the Gnostic philosophy, since they looked upon *matter* as essentially evil, and death as the eternal emancipation of the soul from its union with the body.

The one leading idea in the writings of S. John is *Love*, and it was the central point of all his teaching, oral or otherwise.

Hence, when at length, after he had attained his hundredth year, his strength failed him, and he could no longer perform his functions in the Church, he caused himself to be often borne thither on a litter, and delivered the short but touching discourse, "Little children, love one another."

Hitherto it had been his custom to minister, as an early writer informs us, robed like the priests of the olden dispensation, with the mitre on his head, and the inscription on the plate of gold, "Holiness to the Lord," thereby indicating clearly that the whole spiritual possessions of the olden covenant, save those by nature transitory, had fallen to the inheritance of the truer Israel, the Church Catholic. Now others led the services, and offered the one unbloody sacrifice of the new law; for the gentle hand of death was upon the last of the Apostolic band. He was not dismissed by rude force, as his brethren, to join his Lord, but had tarried until that Lord came to bring him home by a departure so gentle that it hardly seemed to be death, but only the embodiment of the touching phrase, "Sleep in Jesus." And it is hardly wonderful that many could not believe he was really dead, but circulated the wildest legends concerning him when he had long joined the great multitude he had seen from



far-off Patmos, re-united to the brethren with whom he had shared the sorrows of the first Good Friday, the joys of Easter and Ascension, and the mighty gifts of Pentecost.

Before proceeding further in our narrative, it seems expedient to consider briefly the manner of worship and discipline established in the first or Apostolic age. Although the Apostles had received from the great High Priest in person the commission to preach, baptize, celebrate the Eucharist, and absolve the penitent, yet they appear to have allowed the power to lie dormant until it had received the seal of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.

On that very day three thousand were converted and baptized; and we are told they continued steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.

Thus the Apostles supplied by oral teaching the want of the written word; for no book of the New Testament was yet in being. Thus the offering of the Holy Eucharist supplied the chief act and centre of Divine worship, around which other devotional services indicated by the word "prayers" would naturally gather.

The mode of baptism appears to have been generally by immersion; but the simpler mode of pouring water upon the head was in frequent use from the beginning; and it would seem probable that in such cases as the baptism of three thousand in one day, or of the Philippian gaoler and his household, who were baptized in the prison by their prisoners, immersion would have been impracticable.

The *subjects* of baptism were necessarily adults in the

first instance; but their children, who had been partakers of the blessings of the olden covenant from infancy, would naturally be admitted to a corresponding share of the blessings of the new covenant; and the comprehensive phrase, "whole household," more comprehensive than now, used of the subjects of baptism, suggests the admission of infants to the rite. Still, we are not left to mere probability in so important a matter. Not only does the whole analogy between the two covenants irresistibly lead us to the conclusion, that as infants were circumcised, so were they baptized; but direct primitive testimony assures us that in the days of Justin Martyr old men were still living who had been, as he says, "made disciples unto Christ (*i.e.* baptized) in their infancy;" that is, during the lifetime of S. John.

The Sacrament of Baptism was at first administered upon a simple confession of faith, such as that made by the Ethiopian eunuch, or the Philippian gaoler, and administered at once by the minister by whose agency the conversion was effected. But later it became expedient to allow a longer period of probation, during which the converts were called catechumens, and the ceremony was generally performed in the presence of the bishop. Confirmation by the imposition of hands, accompanied probably by the anointing of the forehead with oil, immediately followed.

The Holy Eucharist appears to have been celebrated at least each Lord's Day, thence called "The day of bread." At the conclusion of certain prayers, oblations of bread and wine were made by the congregation, and a portion

separated for the communion. This was consecrated by the bishop alone, the people replying "Amen" at the close of the prayer of consecration. The holy feast was then distributed by the deacons, and portions of the consecrated elements reserved for the sick or for prisoners to whom it could be conveyed.

The primitive simplicity, with which the Eucharist was naturally and of necessity celebrated in the earliest instances, by degrees yielded to a more ornate rendering, as Christians possessing wealth yielded to the natural impulse of honouring the Lord with their substance. Probably the upper chamber wherein they had received the gift of the Comforter was the scene of the earliest Eucharistic celebrations, alluded to in Acts ii. 46, wherein they are said to have broken bread, "*κατ' οἶκον*," "at home," as it is rendered in the margin of our English translation. But when the elaborate system of the Temple ritual was, as we have seen, finally swept away, much which had seemed peculiar to the splendour of the ancient ritual was added to the ritual of Christian worship. The form of the Churches, which we shall hereafter consider more at length, corresponded closely to the architectural features of the Temple, the porch, appropriated to the unbaptized and penitents, to the court of the Gentiles, the nave to the court of the Jews, and the choir, separated by a curtain, and containing the altar, to the Holy of Holies.

It is impossible to tell the exact degree of development these principles had attained at the death of S. John; but it has seemed probable to many writers, that as the pattern of Jewish worship was given to Moses on the

mount, so the Christian worship found, to a certain degree, its pattern in the revelation of the heavenly worship vouchsafed to S. John in Patmos. Especially the Eucharistic Hymns which S. John then heard, the Sanctus of the heavenly choir, Holy, Holy, Holy, is traceable in all the variations of early Christian Liturgies.

The hour of the celebration of the Holy Communion was, it would appear, originally in the evening; but this arrangement endured but for a short time, and the hour was transferred to that of dawn, with the obligation of fasting communion. In dealing with so difficult a question, we may have recourse to the statements of S. Augustine, to whom many sources of information must have been available, now hopelessly lost. He tells us that although the Apostles received the Holy Communion in the evening, when they were not fasting, "yet it is no subject of blame if the *whole Church* now communicates fasting;" for they were guided thus by the Holy Spirit, to show their reverence for so great a Sacrament. He adds that our Lord instituted the Eucharist as His last earthly action before His Passion, the better to convey its exceeding mystery to our hearts; but gave no order as to the hour when it should thereafter be celebrated, leaving this to His Apostles, His ministers upon earth, to arrange. S. Paul possessed this authority, and after giving directions to the Corinthian Church in rectification of the errors to which evening communions, after excess, had given rise, he intimated his intention of setting the rest in order when he came. The change of hour observed was the result of S. Paul's regulations upon his arrival at Corinth.

It is all but certain that the change was universally accepted before S. John's departure from earth. The "Agapæ," or love feast, which had preceded the celebration at Corinth, was a common meal, which rich and poor alike shared. When the change in the hour of celebration took place, this feast appears to have been separated from the Eucharist, and to have been still observed in the evening. Such is the state of things described by Pliny as existing within a few years of the Apostolic era, in a letter we shall presently have occasion to quote at length.

Those who were dangerously ill universally appear to have followed the directions of the Apostle S. James, and after sending for the presbyters of the Church, and confessing their sins, they were by them commended to the Divine mercy, and anointed with oil. The learned and candid Mosheim observes that, although this custom is rarely mentioned by ancient writers, yet there can be no doubt of its universal observance.

All Churches appear to have been unanimous in the observance of the Lord's Day by abstinence from servile work, and attendance at public worship, especially at the celebration of the Holy Communion; but the Jewish Christians still observed the Sabbath in addition to the Sunday. It appears also that Easter and Whitsuntide were, even in the Apostolic age, universally observed by Christians; and there is much reason for supposing that Wednesday and Friday in each week were observed as fasts, in memory of our Lord's betrayal and crucifixion.

The constitution of the Christian Church was from the first essentially the same as now.

In the Apostolic times we find these three orders : (1) Apostles ; (2) Bishops, presbyters, or elders ; (3) Deacons.

When in the providence of God all the Apostles, save S. John, were removed from the world, it was left, as we have already seen, to his charge to organize the Church ; and thus the threefold ministry was established, as a reference to the writings of his disciple, S. Ignatius, would lead us to infer. To the first order, as we have already seen in the case of Timothy and Titus, were committed all the Apostolic prerogatives which were destined to be permanent, the power of transmitting the gift bestowed upon them by the laying on of hands, and of ruling the Churches.

But, as early writers inform us, the successors of the Apostles, naturally hesitating to take upon themselves the higher title of "Apostle," chose that of bishop or overseer, leaving the title of presbyter or priest to the second order. The order of deacons remained unchanged in designation.

Thus there were still the three orders : (1) Bishops ; (2) Presbyters, elders, or priests ; (3) Deacons. S. Ignatius bids those to whom he writes, "Submit yourselves to the bishops, priests, and deacons, without which three orders there is no Church."

This decisive testimony occurs within seven years of the death of S. John.

### *CHAPTER III.*

#### CHRISTIANITY UNDER TRAJAN.

A.D. 98-117.

THE Church had now fully emerged from the Synagogue, and the Catholic Faith was emancipated from the shackles of the Mosaic dispensation, which it had superseded.

Nevertheless the Jewish Christians, who had found refuge in Pella during the siege, clung fondly to their ancestral rites and usages; and, under the name of the Church of Jerusalem, retained such portions of Jewish discipline and ceremonial as could be in any wise incorporated with Christian worship. Their bishop was of the circumcision, and while they lived in unity with their Gentile brethren, their peculiar worship and customs continued to distinguish them until the close of the period embraced in this chapter.

The transition was a slow one, in mercy to those whose hearts clung lovingly to the religion God Himself had given to their fathers—a religion identified with such glorious memories and traditions. But the majority of those Jews who had survived the horrors of the last days of Jerusalem still refused to see the Hand of God in all

this, and persisting in their unbelief, yet looked with sad anxiety for the advent of the Messiah.

But the change in the position of the Church had brought her face to face with a mightier and fiercer foe—the Paganism which overspread the whole earth with its baleful shadow.

The policy of Rome had been to tolerate all national religions. Despising Judaism, she yet endured it; and the great Augustus condescended to request that sacrifices might be offered on his behalf in the Temple at Jerusalem.

But the new religion was not a national one, and therefore had no claim to toleration. It appealed to all nations, and it became manifest at once to all the votaries of Paganism that it must be crushed or *would* crush.

For it was not content to exist side by side with error. It was not content when Tiberius proposed to place the statue of Christ side by side with those of other gods. Light had no concord with darkness—Christ with Belial. It would not tolerate, and therefore was not tolerated.

Had Christianity been the colourless religion which modern thought would sometimes render it, it must have perished. Utterly wanting in zeal and enthusiasm; ready to eat of the table of the Lord or the table of devils, to drink the cup of the Lord or the cup of devils, it would have lost all its power; but confident that *it*, and *it* only, was of God, it went forth in suffering, conquering and to conquer: "*Sanguis martyrum, semen ecclesiarum.*"

It was universally believed in the Early Church that the Pagan deities were not simply creatures of the imagination, but that the evil spirits had taken to themselves



the attributes of Jupiter, Mars, Venus, Bacchus, or the like, and as such sought to rob God of the adoration of His creatures, and to lure mankind to perdition.

Therefore any act of compliance with the popular worship became an act of utter sacrilege. And, alas! it was very hard to avoid such acts; for they not only formed the temple worship, but were incorporated into the common etiquette of society, and the ordinary actions of each day.

Thus the transactions of peace and war, the public spectacles, civic ceremonial, convivial entertainments, the salutations of friends, the courtesies of life, marriage, burial, trade, commerce, were all identified more or less with the rites of Pagan superstition; and a Christian unable to comply with them became an outcast from his family and friends—whom he must desert alike in the bridal hour or the last sad moments of mortality.

Even the arts of music, painting, and poetry were similarly defiled. Paganism is now dead—at least the Paganism of civilized Rome and Greece; and no one anticipates danger from the recital or perusal of the Latin or Greek classics. It was different then, when the allusions to the false gods spoke of living superstitions, and the romantic mythology, celebrated by the genius of the poets, was to the Christian but the praise and the invocation of demons.

Forced, therefore, to tear themselves from the society of their relations and equals; forced to absent themselves from civic rites or military service; forced to shun those dear to them in the tenderest moments, when human joy or affliction called for sympathy, it is not wonderful that

the Christians are described by Tacitus and others as men who, by their hatred of their fellow-creatures, merited the severest punishment.

But there was yet another reason which provoked men, otherwise merciful, such as Trajan or Hadrian, to persecute Christianity.

It fell under the laws against secret societies. It acknowledged authorities unknown to the state; it professed allegiance to another kingdom, and men did not always realize the force of the words, "My kingdom is not of this world." A combination extending from Britain to Mesopotamia was one which augured ill, so they thought, for the Roman government and laws, especially since it was one whose spirit they could not fathom, save that they knew it inspired indomitable courage and contempt of death. It was always the policy of Rome to separate the tributary countries from each other, to prevent the formation of any bonds of union between them, lest they should learn to combine for mutual protection. Christianity appeared such a bond of union, and as such was proscribed.

Again, there were certain mysteries amongst the Christians which were carefully preserved from the world, lest the heathen should find the means to outrage the holiest rites. The doctrine and the ceremonial attending the Holy Eucharist was thus carefully veiled; and the multitude, always suspecting crime where there is secrecy, spread rumours of Thyestean banquets, and attributed cannibalism in its most revolting forms to the followers of the despised faith.

Thus the struggle which we are about to relate commenced. Its first outbreaks, indeed, we have already described—the persecutions under Nero and Domitian.

The persecuting legislation of Nero was preserved, as Tertullian informs us, when his other legislation was repealed; and although the acts passed at this and subsequent periods were not always enforced, yet it was in the power of the authorities to put them in operation. The test of a true citizen was his willingness to observe the sacrificial rites commanded by the state. It was for refusing to perform these, even to the extent of casting a few grains of incense on the sacrificial fire, that the Christians suffered.

There are commonly said to have been *ten* great persecutions, and they are differently enumerated by different writers. Perhaps it would be more correct to say that there were ten periods when the tide of persecution reached its height; for the first three centuries formed one long period of persecution, during which the liberty or life of a Christian was always at the mercy of the law. Mosheim observes that the number ten was probably adopted by historians of the fifth century, owing to the language of the seventeenth chapter of the Apocalypse, wherein it appears to be indicated that *ten* grievous calamities should befall the Church, and that the history was accommodated to the theory. There were, he observes, less than ten if we reckon only the *universal* persecutions; while, if we reckon all the *local* and *provincial* ones, they far exceed that number.

The chief scene of the sufferings of the Christians in

Rome was the famous Amphitheatre, known as the Colosseum, which still survives as the mightiest ruin of the imperial city, hallowed by the blood of the martyrs, and thereby preserved from destruction.

This mighty pile was commenced by Vespasian two years after the capture of Jerusalem, and it is said to have employed thirty thousand workmen, chiefly captive Jews, for the space of eight years, until its dedication by Titus, under the name of the "Flavian Amphitheatre," about A.D. 80. Its form was elliptical, the greater diameter being 620 feet in length, the lesser 513, and the space enclosed about six English acres. Raised on eighty immense arches, it rose to the height of nearly two hundred feet, and seats were provided for nearly one hundred thousand spectators.

Once it was lavishly adorned with gold and marble; and now, stern and grand in its decay, it inspires the spectator with an indefinable awe as he stands where stood the martyr, and beholds the yawning openings where once the wild beast bounded forth to seek his devoted prey, or raises his eyes to the vacant tiers of seats once filled with the maddened crowd, eager for blood, who have so long since followed their victims to the Judge.

Here the bloody sports in which the Roman populace delighted were carried to their fullest extent; here Titus, on the day of dedication, exhibited for slaughter no fewer than 5,000 wild beasts; and at the triumph of Trajan over the Dacian no less than 10,000 gladiators contended, so that the terrible loss of life caused a contemporaneous author to declare that no war ever inflicted such devasta-

tion on the human race as these cruel sports and pastimes. Blood seemed the only stimulant which could rouse the jaded appetites of the populace, and give zest to their pleasures.

Here on this and similar spots, desecrated by human slaughter, the scene of the darkest and most inhuman passions and vices, the battle of the Cross was fought and won: "the blood of the martyrs was the seed of the Church." It is now supposed that the great architect who designed the stupendous pile, becoming a Christian, was amongst the earliest victims who suffered for Christ within its walls. No contemporary mentions the fact, and the name of the great designer seemed hopelessly lost; but a recent discovery in the catacombs, where, amid silence and darkness, the faithful entombed their martyred brethren, brought to light a sepulchral stone, bearing the martyr's cross and palm, while a rough inscription announced that the victim was Gaudentius, and that he built the Flavian Amphitheatre.\*

The catacombs to which we have just alluded were galleries, eight feet in average height, and from three to five feet in width, leading out of the *arenaria* or sandpits, whence the material used in making Roman cement was excavated. Driven from the light of day by cruel persecution, the Christians of the imperial city had begun, at the date of which we are now writing, to make use of these galleries for the burial of their dead (for they had utterly discontinued the heathen practice of burning the bodies), and eventually they made use of them for pur-

\* See Note B.

pose of worship. The earliest dates found in these subterranean chambers, which contain nearly 800 miles of galleries, carry us back to the days of Vespasian (as in the case of Gaudentius), and the galleries contain six or seven millions of niches excavated in the sandstone, where the Christian dead were buried, and the excavations closed with slabs. In times of fierce persecution, as we shall frequently observe, the bishops of Rome and their flocks retired to these underground regions, where, in churches excavated for the purpose, they celebrated the Holy Mysteries, and committed the mangled relics of their hal-  
lowed dead to rest, sometimes marking the spot only by the emblems of martyrdom, sometimes by the touching inscription, "Mayst thou rest in peace and pray for us."

Such was the aspect Christianity bore in the capital of the heathen world at the commencement of the dread struggle of three centuries.

Nerva died in January, A.D. 98, and left the imperial throne to the great Trajan, a wise and merciful ruler, yet one who felt it his stern duty to put in force the laws against Christians, as men dangerous to the peace of the state.

His famous correspondence with Pliny, governor of Bithynia, and son of the great naturalist who perished in the first recorded eruption of Vesuvius, deserves close attention.

Pliny wrote complaining that the temples and altars in his province were deserted, that the contagion of Christianity had seized whole multitudes of all ranks and ages,

and that he was at a loss how to act. He had thought that the inflexible obstinacy with which the Christians refused to conform to the legal rites deserved punishment; but although he had examined two deaconesses by torture, he had discovered nothing beyond a bad and excessive superstition.

"They confessed that their whole error was, that they were wont to meet together on a stated day, before it was light, to sing hymns to Christ as God, and bind themselves by an oath (*sacramentum*) to abstain from the commission of any wickedness."

He continues: "Many of all ages, and of every rank, of both sexes, are accused, and will be accused. Nor has the contagion of this superstition seized cities only, but the smaller towns also, and the open country."

Yet he appeared to think that severity would check what he considered a growing evil, and asked permission of the Emperor to pardon all such as would confess their error.

Trajan replied much as follows—

"You have taken the right method, my Pliny, in your proceedings with the Christians. They are not to be sought for. If any are brought before you, and convicted, they ought to be punished. However, let him that denies that he is a Christian, and consents to worship our gods, be pardoned, even though it is evident he has been one formerly. But in no case receive anonymous information."

Such is an epitome of Trajan's reply, and it marks well the position the *better* emperors took with regard to Christianity.

But Trajan had strictly revived all the laws against secret societies. So fearful indeed was he of anything like combination, that he even prohibited the incorporation of engineers to form a fire-brigade, lest, as he said to Pliny, it should lead to factions. It may easily be judged how he would regard the proposed formation of a universal brotherhood, such as the Church Catholic.

The most notable martyr of the time was Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch, who is supposed by many to have been the little child whom our Lord set in the midst of the disciples, and who was afterwards the especial follower of S. John.

Passing through Antioch in the year 107, on his road eastward, Trajan ordered the aged bishop to be brought before him.

The old man was commonly called Theophorus, or the god-bearer, as if in literal commemoration of the words, "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me;" for the sacramental incorporation of the elect with their risen Lord in His Mystical Body was the very keystone of early Christian theology.

"Who is Theophorus?" asked the emperor.

"One who bears Christ within him," was the reply.

"May I not say I bear our gods within me, since they aid me to overcome my enemies?"

"Alas, there is but one God, Who made heaven and earth; and one Lord Jesus Christ, His only begotten Son, Whom He has sent."

"Do you then carry Him within you, Who suffered under Pontius Pilate?"



"Verily, and indeed; for it is written, 'I will dwell in them, and walk in them.'"

"Let Theophorus, who says he carries the crucified One within him, be thrown to the beasts at Rome, for the entertainment of the people."

"I thank Thee, O God," replied the Saint, "that Thou hast thought me worthy, like the blessed Paul, to glorify Thee by my death."

He was committed, by the decree of Trajan, to a guard of ten soldiers, who were charged to guard him safely to Rome, where he was to be exposed to beasts in the Colosseum. Upon their journey, owing to his weakness, they rested at many cities; especially he abode many days at Smyrna, with S. Polycarp, and thence he wrote epistles to various Churches, in which he exhorted them, amongst other things, to abide in obedience to the ministry God had appointed—"the Bishops, Priests, and Deacons, without which three orders there is no Church,"—and bade them avoid the heretics, who abstained from the Eucharist, as not confessing It to be "the very Flesh and Blood of the Incarnate Son of God."

But the most touching portion of his epistles occurs in that addressed to the Romans, in which he beseeches them not to strive to avert his approaching martyrdom.

"I write (he says) to all the Churches, telling them that I shall willingly suffer for Christ, if ye hinder me not. Suffer me to be food for the wild beasts, since by them I shall attain unto God; for I am His wheat, and, ground by the teeth of wild beasts, shall be found the pure bread of Christ. Therefore encourage the beasts that they may

become my sepulchre, and this mortal flesh be not a burden to you; for then shall I indeed be the disciple of Jesus Christ, when the world shall see not my body.

“From Syria even to Rome I fight with beasts by night and day, being bound to ten leopards, that is to say, to a band of ten soldiers, who, although kindly entreated, are yet none the better, but rather the worse; yet these afflictions instruct me, while I am not justified by them. Fain would I delight in the wild beasts prepared for me. I pray they may devour me speedily, and not spare me as they have sometimes spared others. Pardon me this desire. I know that it is for my profit. Let fire, the cross, the wild beasts, broken bones, lacerated members, shattered limbs, and all the wicked afflictions, which the devil doth inflict, come upon me. I count all as nought that I may win Christ. . . . I seek Him Who died for me; yea, Who rose again. He is my desire, the eternal reward laid up in the heavens. For although I write this living, yet my desire is but to die. Jesus, my Love, is crucified, and the fire that burneth within me, not being quenched by floods of tribulation, biddeth me come to Him.”

Such are some of the expressions in this remarkable epistle, wherein we perceive with what vivid hope and enthusiastic love the early martyrs sought to glorify their Lord by their deaths, and why their examples proved so effectual in the conversion of souls.

Leaving Smyrna shortly afterwards, the Saint resumed his journey, travelling by ship to Troas, whence he wrote an epistle to the Church of the Philadelphians, and a last farewell to Polycarp. They were called hastily to embark

again for Neapolis; for the great Roman festival of the Saturnalia was approaching, and victims were needed for the beasts. Landing at Neapolis, they continued their journey on foot, passing through Philippi, where the Church received the disciple of S. John with much affection. They toiled along the great Roman road until they arrived at Epidamnus, or Dyrrachium, on the opposite coast, whence they again took ship.

Passing Puteoli, to the sorrow of S. Ignatius, who longed to tread in the very footsteps of S. Paul, they landed at Ostia, where a number of the faithful came to meet him, and to welcome him with sorrowful joy.

It was the last day of the Saturnalia, and the guards hurried their prisoner along the eighteen miles of well-paved road which lay between them and their destination, the Colosseum.

The whole city was given up to license as they entered it; for it was a day which bore much resemblance in its observances to the modern Carnival in the same city; and through streets lined with booths, through comic entertainments, and crowds of revellers, they drew nearer to the common source of attraction, the Amphitheatre. The victim appeared to be full of joy, his eager soul seemed already to grasp the crown, and as he pressed through the loud and dissolute tumult of Rome, he seemed already to tread the streets of the New Jerusalem.

But the end was not yet. They passed the huge colossal statue from which the Colosseum derived its name, and stood before one of the low dark entrances, where the victims were wont to enter to return no more.

Here the brethren sought and obtained his parting blessing, and hastened to seek the places to which their respective ranks entitled them, that they might witness his good confession, and nerve themselves in case a similar hour awaited them. It was not a time for yielding to the shrinking nerve, or quaking at death's alarms.

A dead calm came over the immense multitude, succeeding a roar, like that of thunder, from one hundred thousand voices, as the aged saint stood calmly in the centre of the arena, while the prefect read the sentence, and the attendants covered the recent blood stains with fresh sand. In the stillness, the roaring of the wild beasts, eager for their prey, could be distinctly heard, but it had no terrors for the victim. Every eye was fixed upon him, when the iron gates of a den rolled back, and two hungry lions rushed upon him. One minute and he was for ever with the Lord. They found only a few of the larger bones, which the faithful succeeded in obtaining.

When night crept over the city, and the moon shone upon the hallowed arena, three of the brethren entered the silent pile, now no longer echoing with the shouts of the maddened multitude. Spreading a napkin, they gathered together the blood-stained sand, with the bones, and bore them to the villa of Clement, one of the Flavian family, and now the third Bishop of Rome in succession from S. Peter. There they deposited the precious relics in one of the largest rooms, and many of the brethren passed the night around them in prayer. The sequel shall be told in their own words.

"Now these things took place on the twentieth of

December. Having, therefore, ourselves seen them as eye-witnesses, we spent the whole night within the house in tears, entreating the Lord, our knees bent in prayer, to give us, His frail children, full assurance that His mercy over-ruled all that was done, when a gentle sleep seemed to steal over us, and suddenly we saw the holy Martyr, who lovingly embraced us. He seemed to stretch his hands as in prayer for us, while he was covered with sweat like one just come from a mighty conflict, and then he passed away into the glory of the Lord, there for ever to abide."

His hallowed remains were removed to Antioch, to rest amongst the flock he had loved; but when the tide of Saracen conquest reached that fated city, they were again brought back to Rome, to repose beneath the altar of the Church of S. Clement, which occupied the site of the villa of that bishop, with its original oratory.\*

Meanwhile Trajan pursued his course with a large army to attack the Parthians, who were the successors of the ancient Persians, and the greatest foes of the Roman empire in the East.

Many of the Jews, who had escaped the horrors of the great war, had settled amongst the Parthians, under whom they enjoyed protection. Babylon on the Euphrates, Ctesiphon and Seleucia on opposite sides of the Tigris, were their chosen places of exile, as they had been those of their worthier forefathers nearly six centuries earlier; and many of them built their hopes upon the Parthian monarchy, hoping that, by its aid, they might even rebuild Jerusalem and defy Rome.

\* See Note C.

But such visionary hopes were doomed to bitter disappointment. Trajan was everywhere victorious, and returned to Rome for a short time, where he triumphed under the name "Parthicus." Armenia was annexed to his dominions, and the regions of Mesopotamia, between the Euphrates and Tigris, acknowledged his authority. Nisibis was taken by him, and became an important Roman garrison, afterwards famous in ecclesiastical history.

Thus the Jews were bereft of their last hope of national restoration, and, in their despair, broke into open revolt in many parts of the empire, especially in Egypt, Cyprus, and Cyrene. At the foot of Mount Casius they destroyed a shrine, erected to the memory of Pompey (who had first subjugated them) with every mark of hatred, and are said to have inflicted great barbarities on the Gentiles who fell into their power.

Trajan subdued them; but it was but an apparent tranquillity that followed, destined to be followed by a far fiercer outbreak.

But this rebellion caused the authorities to turn their attention towards the Christian Jews, especially as it was well known that their aged bishop, Symeon, the son of Cleophas, was a lineal descendant of the royal line of David, and a kinsman of Christ according to the flesh.

He was no less than one hundred and twenty years of age, when he was arrested, and the merciless judges caused him to be most severely tormented for several days. He bore his cruel sufferings with such firmness, that all were amazed, even the presiding magistrate expressing his surprise that a frame so aged could thus endure.

At length, weary of tormenting him, they ordered him to be crucified, and thus he was permitted to follow his Lord.

Troubles broke out again in the East, and Trajan was called upon to return thither in haste. Again successful, he entered Babylon, Seleucia, and Ctesiphon in triumph, formed the conquered countries into the provinces of Assyria and Mesopotamia, and, filled with an ambition to equal the great Alexander, sailed down the Tigris as a conqueror, even to the Persian Gulf. There, seeing a vessel about to sail for India, he lamented his old age, which forbade him a career of glory like the conqueror he envied. In the year 117, while endeavouring to subdue a revolt of the Arab tribes, he fell ill, and, leaving the command to his adopted son, Hadrian, started to return to Italy, but died on the road at Silenus, in Cilicia. His ashes were conveyed to Rome, and buried beneath the column he had erected to commemorate his victories. It is now surmounted by the statue of S. Paul.

Meanwhile false brethren had, as S. Paul foretold, "privily brought in damnable heresies," causing great perplexity to the faithful. Foremost amongst them were the Gnostics.

The system of the Gnostics would hardly be called a heresy according to the modern force of the term; it was rather an incorporation of certain Christian doctrines **into** a system mainly borrowed from Pagan philosophy.

The cardinal doctrines of this system were as follows:  
1st. Belief in one God, dwelling from eternity in the ful-

ness of light; 2ndly, in countless generations of spiritual beings, called *æons*, proceeding from Him, and representing His attributes; 3rdly, in the permanent and essential evil of all that is material; 4thly, in the existence of a Demiurge, or inferior God, perhaps hostile to the Supreme Being, by whom the material world was governed, and who was the God of the Old Testament; 5thly, in the mission of Christ, sent by the Supreme God, to deliver man from the tyranny of the Demiurge.

According to this system, no resurrection of the body was admissible, since, being material, it was essentially evil. And this led to two opposite lines of conduct; some Gnostics wallowed in sensuality, as merely debasing the material nature; others, more nobly, sought to repress it by asceticism.

Again, since matter was essentially evil, the doctrine of the Incarnation was necessarily modified. Either, as some held, Christ's body was merely a phantom, or else Jesus was a mere man, on whom the æon, Christ, descended when He was baptized, to forsake Him again before His Passion.

6thly. The Demiurge being inimical, or at least rebellious, to the Supreme Being, the Old Testament was utterly rejected, as being simply the record of His will or His doings.

Finally, after death, the soul of the perfect Gnostic, purified perhaps in baptism, and, as some held, by austerities and mortification of the flesh, would be emancipated for ever from its earthly prison, and gathered into the bosom of the Supreme God: such souls as failed to work



out their purification while yet in the flesh being compelled to inhabit other bodies, and pass through another period (or other periods) of probation.

We have already alluded to the subsequent history of Simon Magus, after his encounter with S. Peter at Samaria; but the subject merits a few more lines. It is beyond doubt that he belonged to the class of philosophers who maintained the leading principles we have faintly endeavoured to sketch. But this unhappy magician proceeded to far greater lengths than were customary amongst his followers; for he pretended that in his own person one of the greatest of the æons resided, and that another æon, the mother of all human souls, inhabited the body of a beautiful slave named Helena, whom he had bought at Tyre, and made the companion of his wanderings. He daringly asserted that he came by command of God to abolish the rule of the Demiurge, and to establish that of the Supreme Being. The common tradition that a statue bearing the inscription, "*Simoni Deo Sancto*," was erected to him at Rome, and that, after disputing with S. Peter and S. Paul, he endeavoured to prove his divinity by an attempt to fly, but through the prayers of S. Peter fell and broke his neck, are probably partly inventions of a later age, and partly distortions of fact.

Menander, a Samaritan by birth, is supposed to have been a disciple of Simon Magus, whose doctrines he closely followed. Cerinthus, whose name has been previously mentioned in connection with S. John, taught, and probably originated, the doctrine that Christ was a mere man upon whom the æon, Christ, descended at His

Baptism to forsake Him before His sufferings; and added the doctrine of the Resurrection of the Body, and an earthly millennium, to the usually received Gnostic teaching.

Saturninus of Antioch held the dualistic principle, which asserted the existence of two co-equal and co-eternal Beings—one good, the other evil. Cerdo and Marcion, son of the Bishop of Pontus, followed in his steps to a certain degree, but added an intermediate deity, the creator of the world, neither perfectly good nor perfectly evil. Bardesanes and Tatian, by adding further distinctions, elaborated other sects into life.

Then again there were the Egyptian Gnostics, particularly distinguished from the Asiatics (1) by maintaining the eternity of matter and denying that of evil; (2) by supposing our Blessed Lord to be composed of two Persons—Divine and Human—the union only enduring from the Baptism to the Passion; (3) by denying the necessity of a life of mortification. Amongst the Egyptian Gnostics, *Basilides* framed a most fanciful system, acknowledging the existence of a Supreme Deity, Who produced from His substance seven æons, two of whom engendered the angels, who increased in their generations until there were three hundred and sixty five angelic orders, under the dominion of a mighty lord named Abraxas.

Carpocrates, one of the most vicious teachers of the Egyptian Gnostics, actually recommended a life of vice to his followers as most calculated to debase the body and to set free the soul from its influence. He maintained that God had created all things for the common enjoyment, and that therefore lust and robbery were but arbitrary

names given by mankind to an exercise of the natural rights of their fellows.

It is scarcely wonderful that the sect of Carpocrates fell into utter disgrace; and, as they assumed the name of Christians when the Church was in prosperity, only to apostatize in persecution, it is not wonderful that many of their iniquities were laid to the charge of the Church, and perhaps we may assign this origin to many of the scandalous charges made by the heathen against Christianity.

But the most famous of all the Gnostics were the Valentinians, so called from their leader Valentine. His sect, arising at Rome, spread throughout the empire with great rapidity. His principles included those we have sketched as the common property of the Gnostics, including some peculiarities which formed the distinction of the sect. His imagination was wilder than that of his fellow teachers, and the system he elaborated is so fanciful, yet so profane, that it is marvellous how it attained such great celebrity. It included the theory that the Demiurge was in opposition to the Supreme Being represented by our Saviour, and ascribed the crucifixion to the malice of the former. It denied the resurrection, but admitted the final destruction of the earth by fire.

Our space will not permit us to enlarge upon the principles of this strange combination of Oriental philosophy and error with fragmentary portions of Christian theology. Yet, doubtless, it had its providential use; it forced the Church into intellectual conflict with the existing forms of belief or unbelief, and thus enabled her

to rescue all that was yet of God in the fast-decaying civilization around her; and to press art, literature, and philosophy into the service of the Church, whereas they had been hitherto simply weapons in the hand of the enemy. We shall see hereafter how this led to the formation of the Alexandrian school of Christian theology, famous for the mighty names of Pantænus, Clement, and Origen, who succeeded in foiling the foe with his own weapons, and bringing multitudes into the fold of Christ, if, alas! their own pure faith was somewhat tarnished in the mighty conflict.

## CHAPTER IV.

### CHRISTIANITY UNDER HADRIAN AND THE ANTONINES.

A.D. 117-180.

TRAJAN died at Cilicia, as we have already related, in the year 117, and was succeeded by his adopted son, Publius Ælius Hadrianus, who had been left to his guardianship at the early age of ten years, and had accompanied him on this his last expedition. Hadrian had remained at Antioch, where he learned the death of his benefactor; and causing himself to be proclaimed emperor, wrote to request the confirmation of the senate. He most wisely resolved not to attempt to secure the remote conquest of Trajan, but to make the Euphrates as of old the eastern boundary of his mighty empire. He remained in the East until peace was firmly established, and reached Rome the following year. His character was a strange mixture of good and evil qualities. He had great ability, and had already distinguished himself in philosophy: he studied medicine and mathematics; was a poet, painter, and musician. At the same time he made great pretension to military genius, in which he could not bear to be excelled; such indeed was his jealousy that he put several persons to death on divers pretences, but in

reality because he was conscious of their superiority in his favourite pursuits.

We have already spoken of the revolt of the Jews under Trajan, partially subdued. The rebellion had broken out again, under circumstances of singular atrocity, and the insurgents had committed the grossest barbarities upon the Gentile population. Hadrian had studied the Old Testament Scriptures, and was not indisposed to be merciful to the Jews; but the indignation generally inspired by their cruelties, and the hatred they were known to bear to the whole Gentile world, effectually prevented the extension of any indulgence, had such been his wish. He destroyed their Egyptian colony and temple; desolated Cyrene, where they dwelt in great numbers, so that it had to be re-peopled at the close of the war; and, finally, sent a ferocious general, named Turbo, to stamp out the last embers of the insurrection in Palestine itself.

The unhappy Israelites were completely defeated; and, to extinguish the last remnant of their national existence, Hadrian built a heathen city on the ruins of Jerusalem, which he named "*Ælia Capitolina*." A temple of Jupiter defiled Mount Moriah, a temple of Venus, Mount Calvary, thus equally wounding the feelings of Jews and Christians. The figure of a hog was carved over the outer gate of the city, in derision of the Mosaical distinction between the clean and the unclean, and in every possible way the national prejudices of the Jews were set wholly at nought.

A fierce outbreak was the result. Irritated to the last degree, a mob of desperate men, setting all danger at

nought and despising death, broke out into fresh rebellion under one Cozba, a pupil of the great rabbi Akiba who took to himself the title of Barcocab, the son of the Star, in allusion to the prophecy of Balaam, and pretended to be the long-expected Messiah. Multitudes flocked to his standard, and he seized upon Beth-horon, then called Bithera, as his head-quarters: it had been the scene of the great victory related in the book of Joshua.

There he reigned for two years and a half, and made himself a fearful name by his cruelty to both Gentiles and Christians, since the latter would not acknowledge him as their Messiah. At the end of that period, Hadrian besieged the city in person, and after a desperate resistance took it by storm. Barcocab was killed in the battle, his followers put to the sword, and their leaders, the rabbis, most cruelly tortured. The aged Akiba was actually torn to death by red-hot pincers. The few survivors of this dreadful scene were sold as slaves under the great oak of Mamre, on the spot where Abraham had once sat in the cool of the day, when the mysterious *Three* appeared to him and promised that in his seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed. From that time the Jewish people seemed to lose all hope of a restoration. For many generations, once only in the year, were they permitted to approach their fallen home, and on payment of a large sum, to weep over the desolation of Jerusalem.

It became all important now for the Christians to sever their holy cause from that of the olden dispensation, and even the very vestiges of the Jewish ceremonial fell into disuse. A Gentile bishop was appointed to rule the Jewish

and Gentile Christians alike, at *Ælia Capitolina*, the first uncircumcised bishop being named *Marcus*.

The state of the Christians during the first years of *Hadrian* differed nothing from that under *Trajan*. They were protected, indeed, in either case from anonymous accusations; but the heathen priests, thus disappointed of their prey, were not at a loss to find other means of stirring up the government against the faithful.

Did a famine or pestilence occur, it was the wrath of the gods because the Christians were suffered to live; did a river burst its bounds, and inundations sweep away harvests or villages, again it was the Christians; and so, when the multitude were assembled in circus or forum, a few prompters, judiciously dispersed, raised the cry, "*Christianos ad leones!*" and the popular fury appeared to necessitate the sacrifice of the few to the safety of the many.

But one was found to protest against this unjust iniquity. *Serenus Granianus*, proconsul of Asia, represented to *Hadrian* the cruelty and injustice of sacrificing persons convicted of no crime, and in many cases better subjects than their accusers, to the sanguinary caprice of the mob. Nor were his generous exertions in vain.

About this time the emperor visited Athens, still the focus of heathen civilization. Here he was initiated into the Eleusinian mysteries, supposed to contain the deepest secrets revealed by the gods to man; and while he listened to the orations of Stoics or Epicureans, still as idle and as talkative as in the days of *S. Paul*, *Quadratus*, Bishop of Athens, a man educated in all the learning and philosophy



of Athens, presented the first Christian apology, in company with another Christian philosopher named Aristides. These apologies, which addressed themselves to the emperor's convictions, together with the letter of Serenus Gracianus, produced the desired effect, and Hadrian issued an edict forbidding any person in authority to yield Christians to the violence of the mob, or to sentence them to death, unless convicted of crimes against the laws.

Still, since Christianity itself was a crime in the eyes of the law, persecutions still continued, only under a more formal process; and it must be confessed that in many instances the faithful eagerly sought to obtain the martyr's crown, forgetting that thereby they caused the heathen to sin. "Wretched men," exclaimed Arrius Antoninus, the proconsul, "if you are weary of life, is there not rope enough for you to hang yourselves with?" But this presumptuous grasping at the palm of martyrdom was condemned by the Church, and it was observed that those who put themselves most eagerly forward were frequently the first to give way under torture.

There do not appear to have been many martyrs of note under this prince; still it is perhaps well to relate one of the most prominent legends of the time, containing more or less of truth, but only partially authenticated. In the days of Hadrian there lived a Christian widow named Symphorosa, with her seven sons, near the beautiful villa which the emperor built hard by the falls of the Anio. Now the priests of Hercules had a temple in the town above, and invoked their demon with many evil rites. But at length their god remained deaf to their

incantations, because they were hindered by the prayers of the Christian matron in her home below. So they besought the emperor to compel her to offer sacrifice ; and he sent for her, and bade her obey the law. And when she steadfastly refused, the emperor, waxing wroth, bade her choose between obedience and death.

She replied, "My husband and his brother both suffered for the Lord, and I and my sons are ready to die too."

So they took her to the temple, and after they had beaten her in vain with many stripes, and grievously mangled her suffering body, they threw her into the river above the fall, and she disappeared from the sight of men to be for ever with the Lord. Nor were her boys unworthy of so noble a mother ; for, being brought before the emperor, and found constant to the end, they were dismissed, by various cruel torments, from this evil world to abide with their mother in the presence of the Lord Whom they loved.

The latter days of Hadrian were days of sadness and degradation. The loss of his favourite, Antinous, a youth of great beauty, who perished in the waters of the Nile, as he ascended it in the emperor's train, embittered his remaining days. The town nearest to the fatal scene was named after the lost favourite. Divine honours were decreed to him ; yet men whispered that he had perished in one of those paroxysms of mad anger to which Adrian was subject by the emperor's own hand. After this period it became dangerous to approach the lord of life and death. Illness increased upon him. He begged his slaves to end his pain by poison. He uncovered his naked breast, and

besought a barbarian slave in vain to thrust his sword through the heart. All was in vain; his sickness and misery increased, yet he knew not where to turn for consolation. The pagan mysteries threw no light upon the tomb. Dying, he repeated those touching stanzas, commencing "animula, vagula, blandula," which have been thus paraphrased by Prior—

"Poor little, pretty, fluttering thing,  
Must we no longer live together?  
And dost thou plume thy trembling wing,  
To take thy flight thou know'st not whither?  
Thy hum'rous vein, thy pleasing folly,  
Lie all neglected, all forgot;  
And pensive, wav'ring, melancholy,  
Thou dread'st, and hop'st thou know'st not what."

Such was all the succour paganism could give to its votaries in the hour of dissolution. The strength of Christianity lay in its possession of the secret of eternal life—the doctrine of the resurrection.

He was succeeded by Antoninus Pius, who was then fifty years old, and had passed through the highest offices of the state with the applause of all men. His virtues were by no means impaired by his exaltation.

It was during his long reign of twenty-two happy and prosperous years, that Justin Martyr, the great apologist of the Christian Church, flourished.

This great Christian philosopher was born in Palestine, in a town built upon the site of the ancient Sychem. He studied in all the various schools of philosophy, finally taking rest in that of Plato, until a more divine theology was revealed to him. Walking upon the sea-coast, meditating upon some abstract argument of his favourite sage,

he became lost in the contemplation of the *possible* future which might await the soul. He could not solve the mystery by the aid of his master, and raised earnest aspirations for Divine wisdom to the unknown God, when he met an aged man of singularly venerable appearance, from whose conversation he learned the truth, and embraced it with joy.

It was the common tradition that his companion had been an angel in human form; but leaving the question as one which might easily arise in an age so fertile in prodigies and miracles, we may follow the converted philosopher, now baptized, through the maritime provinces of Asia and Africa, everywhere proclaiming the truth which had made him free.

Coming to Rome at the commencement of the reign of Antoninus, whose gentle disposition had led him to discountenance all persecution of the Christians, he composed his first "Apology," wherein he defends the faithful from the charges commonly brought against them.

In it, he appeals to the constancy of the Christians under suffering as a proof of the truth of their religion; he shows the injustice of the persecutors; points out the fulfilment of prophecy in the Person of Christ; appeals to the innocency of the lives of the Christians; shows the absurdity of the reports concerning their worship; and finally describes, so far as was then lawful, their rites and customs.

He tells us that the converts, after due preparation, were brought to a place where there was water, and "were regenerated," in the same manner in which he and

others had been regenerated, being baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. He also describes the celebration of the Holy Eucharist, which took place on the Sunday at the hour of dawn, telling how the president, taking the bread, and the wine mixed with water, into his hands, consecrated the gifts, concluding with the words, "For this Food, thus Eucharistized by the Holy Ghost and by prayer, is no longer common bread and wine, but the Flesh and Blood of the Incarnate Jesus."

Soon after the publication of this "Apology," Antoninus wrote the rescript, which Eusebius preserves, in favour of the Christians, not only forbidding their punishment, but even asserting that their accusers were deserving of chastisement, and should be held guilty.

But, alas! this peace and toleration ended when the gentle Antoninus Pius passed away in the year 161, and was succeeded by his adopted son Marcus Aurelius.

Never have the records of Pagan antiquity presented us with a character so noble as that of Marcus Aurelius, the successor of Titus Antoninus.\* The noblest of all Pagan emperors, his life shines the brighter by its startling contrast with the impurity and wickedness of the age. Niebuhr, the great historian, says, "It is more delightful to speak of Aurelius than of any man in history; for if ever there was sublime human virtue, it was his." He was born in the days of Hadrian, under whose notice he was brought at the early age of six years; and Niebuhr tells us again, that the bad and sinful habits of that emperor left him, when he gazed on the sweetness of that infant child,

\* See his life in "Seekers after God." By Rev. F. W. Farrar.

to whom he gave the name of Verissimus, "most true." Had Aurelius been of age when Hadrian died, he would probably have succeeded him at once; but he was only seventeen, and Antoninus was selected to fill the throne with the express condition that he should adopt the youth, and make him heir presumptive to the imperial dignity. Educated at home, in all the literature of the age, his physical training was not neglected; and he certainly seemed to have attained the standard of life implied in the maxim, "*mens sana in corpore sano*." He has left us in his "*Meditations*" a beautiful picture of his life. His gratitude is warmly expressed that his home education spared him the contaminating influence of a Roman public school, while he was at the same time absolutely free from the effeminate vices a home training in those days would ordinarily have engendered. "I learnt from my mother," he says, "not only abstinence from evil deeds, but even from evil thoughts."

Rigidly self-denying, in his twelfth year he embraced the tenets and assumed the attire of a Stoic. He habitually slept on a plank bed, with a skin as the coverlet, amidst the luxury of a Roman palace: he disciplined his body by boxing, wrestling, and running; his mind by the study of the noblest works of art and literature. Grateful and loving in an age when ingratitude was a prominent vice, diligent and laborious in an age of sloth, self-denying while luxury tempted him on every side, serenely virtuous amidst the most glowing temptations to vice, he seemed to be the very representative of the few, who, as S. Paul tells us, having not the law, "do by nature the things contained in the law."

Most sad it seems to us that the light, which had already enlightened the Gentiles, should never have reached the noblest amongst them; nay, that one of the most severe persecutions the Church ever sustained should have taken place under his government, although his personal responsibility was probably very slight, the edicts of his predecessors being, as we shall presently observe, put into active and cruel operation, not in Rome, but in Gaul and Asia Minor.

The cause of the persecution was, as usual, the belief of the multitude that the calamities which happened to the empire were simply the manifestations of Divine anger, because of the supposed atheism and impiety of the Christians. This unreasoning and miserable clamour was louder than ever at this time, owing to the pressure of misfortune.

Aurelius commenced his reign by associating his adopted brother, Lucius Verus, with him in the government, and, supposing him to possess those manly qualities which would better qualify him than himself to assume the military administration, he yielded the management of such matters chiefly to Verus, while he assumed the direction of the civil administration.

But Verus was addicted to vices which his benefactor did not suspect, and was no sooner away from the immediate influence of Aurelius than he gave way to them utterly, and spent his whole energies in riot and debauchery.

The two emperors were scarcely seated upon the throne, when the frontiers of the empire were assailed on every side by troops of barbarians. The Parthians desolated Syria, the Catti burst over the German frontiers, and the

distant isle of Britain, harassed by the Caledonians, contributed its share to the sad intelligence received from every side. It was the first year of Aurelius, and his wife, Faustina, had just presented him with twins, one of whom survived to become known to history as that monster of iniquity, the Emperor Commodus. The Tiber overflowed its banks, and destroyed large portions of the city; famine and pestilence added their horrors; indeed, nothing could exceed the complicated misery of the period, heightened as it was by the contrast with the happiness which had distinguished the reign of Antoninus.

Verus went to command the army of the East in person; but proceeding no further than Antioch, left the glory of the war to his lieutenants, who, indeed, vanquished the Parthians, but acted with shameless cruelty, which was avenged by the outbreak of famine and pestilence in their own ranks, and as they came home they disseminated the plague in every region they traversed; while Verus, unmindful of the misery around him, still remained plunged in shameless debauchery, till he caught the infection and died at Aquileia.

The heathen priests, thoroughly alarmed, vainly supplicated the interference of their gods; and after they had celebrated every sacred rite or mode of supplication known amongst them, they had recourse to the usual expedient, and ascribed all the calamities of the state to the Christians.

In his "Meditations" the Emperor Aurelius alludes once only to the Christians, and then to censure that indifference to death, which appeared to him to spring from gloomy



fanaticism. But it is impossible to believe that a man, whose whole life was spent in philanthropy, and who cared so little for the popular superstition that he but once dedicated a temple, and then to Beneficence, could have taken any pleasure in persecution.

But the laws of Trajan were still existing, and had been acted upon occasionally, with the sanction of both Hadrian and Antoninus, and Aurelius saw no reason for departing from the practice of his predecessors. We must not judge him hardly, as if he possessed our own light; the wisest and best statesmen and philosophers of his day spoke of Christianity with hatred and contempt; the multitude firmly believed in the rumours of horrible iniquities, perpetrated by the Christians, of cannibalism in its most revolting forms, and nameless but shameful vices.

The very "*disciplina arcani*" observed by the Christians, whereby the "Sacred Mysteries," as they were commonly called, were protected from the intrusion of unbelievers, added to this evil, and gave rise to the suspicion of Thyestean banquets; while the frequent application of torture, in its most agonizing forms, to the slaves of Christians had extorted confessions of scenes of iniquity, as imaginary as those which similar applications produced from the supposed witches of mediæval or later times.

Therefore we may well believe that Marcus Aurelius, when he issued the following rescript, believed that he was doing God service, and averting avenging wrath from the people committed to his paternal care.

"We have heard that the laws are violated by those who, in our times, call themselves Christians. Seize those

people, and if they refuse to offer sacrifice to our gods, punish them with various kinds of torment; but in such a manner that justice be mingled with mercy, and that the punishment cease when the crime is abandoned."

The heathen priests, thus successful, lost not a moment in stirring up the multitude, and a most deadly persecution, commonly known as "The Fourth," commenced. It probably raged throughout the empire, but its severity was most conspicuous, as we have already remarked, in Asia Minor and in Gaul.

Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna, was the last of those who were called the Apostolic Fathers, as having seen and conversed with the Apostles themselves. He had been instituted to the bishopric by S. John himself, and is the angel of that Church mentioned in the Apocalypse. He is said to have been originally a slave, but to have been raised out of that state by a pious lady named Calisto, who educated and maintained him. He became catechist and deacon of the Church of Smyrna under Bucolus, the first bishop, and on the death of that prelate was appointed his successor; being probably the bishop to whom the Apostle entrusted the young man, whom he afterwards reclaimed from robbery and crime, as we have previously narrated.

After S. Ignatius had left him on that last journey to Rome, recorded in the last chapter, Polycarp wrote his Epistle to the Philippians, which yet survives, and finally, when the news of the glorious triumph in the Colosseum reached Asia, he assumed, by common consent, the chief rule of the Asiatic Churches.

The well-known Paschal controversy sprung up about

this period. The Churches of the East, following the example of S. John, were in the habit of commemorating the Passion on the fourteenth day of the first moon after the vernal equinox, and Easter day on the third day afterwards, irrespective of the day of the week it might fall upon, following therein the Jewish custom. The Churches of the West considered it expedient to commemorate the Passion and Resurrection on the days of the week when they respectively occurred, even as we do now, and kept Easter therefore on the Sunday following the first full-moon after the vernal equinox. Polycarp took advantage of the peace, the Church enjoyed under Antoninus, to visit Rome for the purpose of settling this dispute.

Anicetus was then Bishop of Rome, and he received Polycarp with great kindness. It was agreed that the Churches should each follow their accustomed rule without any breach of brotherly love; and at the desire of Anicetus, Polycarp celebrated the Holy Eucharist in his presence, possibly in the Church of S. Clement, where the bones of the martyred Ignatius had first reposed.

It was here that Polycarp met Marcion, the celebrated teacher of the Gnostics, and being accosted by him, acted in the spirit of his master, S. John, when he met Cerinthus. "Do you know me?" enquired the heresiarch. "Yes, indeed, I know thee for the eldest son of Satan."

Returning to his duty at Smyrna, the long years of Antoninus passed in great tranquillity, the edict of that gentle emperor secured peace, and the heathen were afraid to molest the faithful, lest they should incur the penalty adjudged by the edict to false accusers.

But the fierce passions of the heathen mob only slept—they were not dead—and they but awaited the moment when they might again blaze forth into action. It came. The reign of Aurelius and Verus commenced, the calamities we have enumerated convulsed the empire, the terror of the Parthians was felt even at Smyrna, and the superstitious dread, encouraged by the heathen priests, combined with the native ferocity of the populace, made them hail the edict of Aurelius with savage joy.

A very full and precise account of the persecution at Smyrna is given in an epistle addressed by the surviving members of that Church to their brethren of the Churches in Pontus, of which we give a brief analysis.

They tell us that at the beginning of the persecution, those standing around the martyrs were struck with amazement at their constancy, seeing them lacerated with scourges to their bones and arteries, so that the very bowels were exposed to view. They were then laid upon sharp sea shells and points of weapons upon the ground, and, passing from torture to torture, were at last thrown as food to wild beasts.

Enraged by their constancy, and especially by that of one named Germanicus, the whole multitude shouted out, "Away with the impious. Let Polycarp be sought." Polycarp had at first determined to remain in the city; but, at the entreaties of his friends, had sought shelter at a country house without the walls, where, with a few brethren, he was giving his whole time to prayer for the afflicted Churches.

In this situation, three days before he was seized, he

had a vision at night. Whilst engaged in mental prayer, the pillow under his head seemed to take fire, and to be consumed. Awaking from sleep, he interpreted this vision as a revelation from God that it would be necessary for him to give up his life in the flames for the sake of his Lord.

But as the search waxed hot for him, he was persuaded by the loving compulsion of his brethren to go yet further away to a distant retreat.

There the pursuers sought him, and having found two boys, they scourged them until one, giving way under the pain, revealed the retreat of the bishop. Entering upon him at a late hour, they found him resting in an upper room, whence, although he might easily have escaped to another house, he would not, saying, "The Lord's will be done."

He received his pursuers with such gentle love and unaffected courage, that they were strangely moved, and readily granted him permission to pray for one hour, while he ordered food to be given them; after which they placed him upon an ass, and conducted him to the city. It was Easter Eve.

Entering Smyrna, he met the "Irenarch" and his father, who endeavoured to persuade him to recant, and for that purpose took him up in their carriage with them; but when he steadfastly refused, they cast him down with such unmanly violence that they broke his thigh.

But, not at all daunted, he requested his guards to take him on to the amphitheatre. As they entered there was a fearful uproar, in the midst of which he heard a voice from heaven, saying, "Be strong, Polycarp, and play the

man." No one saw who it was that spoke, but the voice was heard by many brethren.

The proconsul, Statius Quadratus, implored him to set the example of renouncing Christ, saying—

"Swear by the genius of Cæsar. Cry, Away with the impious."

Looking round upon the multitude, and then raising his eyes to heaven, he said with a sigh, "Away with the impious."

"Swear," said the governor, "and I will dismiss you. Revile Christ."

"Eighty and six years," replied Polycarp, "have I served Him, and He never forsook me. How can I now blaspheme my King?"

The proconsul at length said, "I have wild beasts at hand, and to them I will cast you, unless you change your mind."

He answered, "Call them; I may not repent from the better to the worse."

"I will cause you to be consumed by fire, since you despise the beasts."

"You threaten fire that burns for a moment," replied Polycarp, "and know not the fire which is eternal. But why do you delay? Do as you wish."

Then the herald proclaimed in the midst, "Polycarp professes himself to be a Christian;" and the multitude of Jews and Gentiles cried out, "This is he who teaches Asia, who persuades multitudes not to sacrifice. Let loose a lion upon him, upon the destroyer of our gods."

But as Philip the Asiarch told them that the exhibition

of lions was then completed, they all cried out that he should be burned alive, and rushed to collect wood and straw for that purpose, the Jews being especially active.

But when the pile was prepared, laying aside all his clothes, and with difficulty taking off his shoes—an office which, on account of his venerable age, the brethren had always discharged for him—he turned to the pile. As they were about to secure him with spikes, according to the cruel practice of those days, he begged them to let him stand unsecured, saying that He Who gave him strength thus to suffer would enable him to remain unmoved upon the pile. They complied with his request. Then standing on the pile, like a noble victim from the great flock, he lifted up his voice in prayer and thanksgiving. After he had repeated “Amen,” and finished his prayer, the executioners kindled the fire. The rest shall be given in the words of the brethren.

“And [then] when it arose in flames we saw a miracle, those of us who were privileged to behold it, and all preserved to declare the facts to others. For the flames presented an appearance like an oven, as when the sail of a ship is filled by the wind, and thus formed a wall around the body of the martyr. And he was in the midst, not like burning flesh, but like gold and silver purified in the flames. We also perceived a fragrant odour, like the fumes of incense or some other precious aromatic drugs. At length the wicked persecutors, seeing that his body could not be destroyed by fire, commanded the executioner to draw near and plunge his sword into him. And when this was done, such a quantity of blood gushed forth that the

fire was extinguished; so that the whole multitude was astonished at the difference between the unbelievers and the elect, amongst whom this bishop of the Catholic Church at Smyrna was the most Apostolical teacher of our times."

They go on to tell us how the Jews endeavoured to prevent their obtaining the precious relics of the martyr, lest, as they ignorantly said, the Christians should abandon the Crucified, and worship Polycarp; not knowing, said they, "that we can never abandon Christ, Who suffered for our salvation. For Him we *worship* as the Son of God, but the martyrs we *love* as His disciples and imitators."

The centurion, therefore, carried the body to be fully consumed; but the brethren thus conclude:

"Then at last taking up his bones, more valuable than precious stones, and more tried than gold, we deposited them where it was proper that they should be. There also the Lord will grant us to assemble and celebrate the natal day of his martyrdom in joy and gladness."

About this time Justin Martyr sealed his testimony by his blood. He had become engaged in a dispute with one Crescens, a cynic, and had frequently refuted him in discussion in the presence of many witnesses. Beaten in argument, Crescens had recourse, like many vanquished disputants, to other weapons, and he who advised others to despise death, plotted death for Justin, says Eusebius, "as if it were a great evil." The circumstances of his death are unknown in detail, but it is said that he was first scourged and then beheaded.

But the fiercest of the storms fell upon the towns of



Vienne and Lyons, in Gaul, where the Gospel had made no small progress, under the aged bishop Pothinus, one of the remaining disciples of S. John. Again we have detailed accounts of their sufferings in a letter, written after the fury of the storm had abated, to the Churches in Asia, from which these Western Churches had probably derived their origin.

The first to suffer death was a well-known citizen named Epagathus, who had stood forth as the defender of his slandered brethren; and afterwards nearly all the Christians in the two cities were seized, and their domestic slaves examined by torture. Under the agony, they accused their masters of the usual crime of cannibalism, misinterpreting allusions they had heard to the sacramental participation of the Body and Blood of Christ. These charges, being divulged amongst the multitude, inflamed them with the fiercest hate against the Christians, whom they accused of all the iniquities committed by the fabled *Œdipus* or *Thyestes*, and looked upon as the causes of all the calamities which had happened to their generation.

The cruelties inflicted upon these noble martyrs almost exceed belief. *Blandina* was a girl of such delicate constitution that it appeared impossible she should withstand the tortures inflicted upon her; but she endured excruciating suffering, refusing to acknowledge the truth of the false charges against Christianity, and only repeating, "I am a Christian: no evil is done amongst us."

*Sanctus* the deacon was so mutilated that his body had almost lost the human form, and had become one

continuous wound. The judge, irritated by his fortitude, ordered red-hot plates of copper to be applied to his suffering frame. He bore it without shudder or groan.

Attalus was placed in a red-hot iron chair, and calmly reproached his tormentors with practising like cruelties to those they falsely imputed to the Christians. Finally, the surviving martyrs were exposed to the wild beasts, and their relics burnt, and cast into the Rhone in mockery of the Resurrection.

The bishop Pothinus had died in prison of the injuries he had received, and was succeeded in his See by the great *Irenæus*, a disciple of S. Polycarp.

In the neighbouring city of Autun died Symphorian, whose memory, and that of his mother, must not be forgotten. As he was being led to the scene of his final sufferings, she met him. "My son Symphorian," said this noble woman, "remember now thy God: fear not a death which leads to eternal life. Lift your eyes to heaven, and despise the torments which endure but a few brief moments, while they conduct to an eternal crown which will never fade."

The Faith which could inspire these heroic words, and which could nerve weak mortals to bear such intense suffering, was indeed of God. No human malice could shake the courage of these heroic followers of the Cross; they were destined to conquer by their blood, and their enemies must sometimes have felt as much.

The persecution was once checked, it is said, by a strange incident, known as the "Legend of the Thundering Legion."

In A.D. 174 Aurelius carried the war against the barbarians, named the Quadi, beyond the river Dannbe. It was the middle of summer, the heat was excessive, and the enemy had contrived to ensnare the Roman army in a valley totally destitute of water, securing all the outlets so that they could not escape. All the agonies of thirst had seized upon the victims, when a legion composed almost entirely of Christians, raising their hands towards heaven, invoked the God who once heard the prayer of Elijah.

Their prayer was answered, the rain descended in torrents, and the soldiers were employing each vessel they possessed in gathering the precious liquid, when the disappointed barbarians burst upon them. A tempest of hail burst in the very faces of the assailants; lightnings devastated their ranks, and drove them to seek shelter in instant flight; while Aurelius and his rescued army adored the God of the Christians, like Ahab and the Israelites of old.

But as in those olden days, so likewise now. The emperor and his subjects forgot the deliverance, and again sought the lives of the faithful.

Such is the legend, The fact of the deliverance is certain; but the Pagan writers claimed the honour for their own gods, ascribing the sudden interposition to the magical incantations of one Arnesiphis, an Egyptian soothsayer, who accompanied the army.

Papias, Bishop of Hierapolis, was probably the last survivor of the disciples of S. John; and it is also stated that he had conversed with the daughters of S. Philip the Deacon, two of whom had finished their course at Hierapolis.

He wrote five books, which he called "Explanations of the Oracles of Christ," containing many traditions concerning the Apostles, which he had received from their contemporaries. But his writings contain so many things which are purely legendary that their authority is not greatly esteemed. He is supposed to have suffered martyrdom in this persecution; and thus the last of those who had seen and conversed with the Apostles was removed, Polycarp of Smyrna, Pothinus of Lyons, and Papias of Hierapolis, all suffering in this grievous persecution.

Melito, Bishop of Sardis, a Greek by birth, and well versed in philosophy, wrote an apology for the faith, which he addressed personally to the emperor. Nor was the appeal wholly unsuccessful; the persecution was checked shortly afterwards by a letter of the emperor, in which he refutes the groundless belief that earthquakes, and such like calamities were to be ascribed to the anger of the gods against the Christians, who seemed least of all men to dread them, and renewed the injunctions of his predecessors against the accusers of the Faithful, while he rebuked the folly of the supposition that persecution could subdue men who seemed to prefer death for their religion to life itself.

And yet it is sad to think that such men as Polycarp or Pothinus should have suffered for their firm adherence to the Faith under the rule of a man so benevolent and merciful as Marcus Aurelius. It was the misfortune of the Christians that they had to dread the mistaken justice of the best of their rulers far more than the selfish indifference of indolent or worthless tyrants.

Shortly after the fury of the persecution decreased, the emperor left Rome to carry on a campaign against the barbarians on the Danube. After a few brief months of mental anxiety and bodily fatigue, he sank beneath the burden of his toils, and died at Vienna, in March, A.D. 180, in the twentieth year of his reign, and the fifty-ninth of his age, the brightest and purest of the heroes of Paganism; one whose whole life seemed modelled upon the precepts of that Saviour whom he ignorantly persecuted in the suffering members of His Mystical Body; one who, had he but known the light, would willingly have lived and died for the Faith he proscribed. There are few sadder subjects for reflection than his career and his mental struggles as revealed by his "Meditations," seeking earnestly for light, examining himself daily, labouring even for those ungrateful for his care, with unwearying love, yet blind while light was so near. No certain hope of a future individual existence throws light upon these Meditations; only a vague belief that the spirit, emancipated from the body, would return to mingle with the great world spirit of which it was but an emanation. We can but lament that one so pure should never have known the secret of life and immortality revealed to the meanest of his victims.

In this reign the philosophers and literati of the age first began to consider the tenets of the Christians worthy of serious refutation.

The opposition was led by Celsus, who, in a long and laboured treatise, charged the Christians with ignorance, barbarism, and superstition.

He had studied the sacred writings in order to refute

them, and to turn them to ridicule; but had studied them so carelessly, that he continually confounded the Old and New Dispensations. He ascribed the miracles of the Gospel, which few Pagan writers or controversialists attempted to deny, to magical arts; and mistaking the meaning and force of the Sacramental system, charged the Christians with still having recourse to the same magical practices. Worthless and inconclusive as were his arguments, yet the fact of their appearance indicates the progress Christianity had made, and the work of Celsus remained for nearly a century as the chief text-book of the Pagan controversialists.

But the battle had to be fought out on the arena, not in the schools of the philosophers. The rack, the stake, and the scourge had to be conquered; the scribbling of the heathen writers was of secondary importance.

## CHAPTER V.

### FROM THE ACCESSION OF COMMODUS TO THE DEATH OF SEVERUS.

A.D. 180-211.

COMMODUS, the son and successor of the virtuous Marcus Aurelius, was in every way unworthy of the father whose conspicuous virtues procured the son an undisputed accession to the throne.

Once more the vices of Nero, or Domitian, were represented on the world's wide stage; while to the follies and crimes of his predecessors Commodus added that of appearing from time to time in the Amphitheatre as a gladiator, and in that character slaying several hundreds of unfortunate wretches, who were forced to engage him with blunted weapons.

Yet during his infamous career the afflicted Church found leisure to bind up her wounds, and enjoyed comparative peace, the only martyr of note, of whose sufferings we have certain knowledge, being one Apollonius, a senator, who was accused by one of his own slaves.

He was allowed to make his own defence before the senate, and was then condemned to be beheaded; while the miserable informer had his limbs broken one by one, and

thus by a cruel death expiated his treason (for such it was considered) to his master.

The Churches in Gaul shared in the restored tranquillity, the martyred Pothinus being succeeded by the renowned Irenæus, a bishop whose services to the cause of Christianity deserve more than a passing notice.

Irenæus was of Greek extraction, a native of Smyrna, brought up at the feet of Polycarp from his earliest youth. He was learned, not only in Christian doctrine, but in the heathen philosophy and mythology, so that he became a practised controversialist. He was still a young man when he was sent by the Churches of the East to aid Pothinus in the Churches they had founded in Gaul; and arriving at Lyons, he applied himself with the utmost energy to the work of a missionary amongst the Celtic population. He learned their language, although it had been so far superseded by the Latin that it was only spoken by the lower classes, and by these means gained great power over the hearts of the poorer classes, who heard in their own rough, guttural tongue the Word of Life.

Either during, or (as some suppose) at the close of the persecution, he was sent to Rome on a mission to Eleutherus respecting the rise of the Montanist heresy and the Paschal controversy.

Montanus, a native of Syria, and recent convert to Christianity, disappointed of preferment in the Church, gave out that he was inspired by the Holy Ghost to bring the Church to maturity, and that his two disciples, ladies who had forsaken their husbands, were prophetesses. Obtaining many followers, they distinguished themselves by



extravagant austerities and asceticism; but the great feature of their teaching, which greatly disturbed the minds of many Christians, and unduly influenced the Church herself, was a denial of the possibility, or at least the probability, of the remission of sins committed after Baptism.

The progress of the Paschal controversy may be briefly sketched. The mild counsels of Anicetus, Bishop of Rome, had hitherto prevailed, and the differing Churches had been permitted to follow their own uses without a breach of peace and unity—the Easterns justifying themselves by the example of S. Philip and S. John, the Westerns by the authority of S. Peter and S. Paul. But towards the close of the second century, Victor, the third in succession from Anicetus, endeavoured to force the Eastern Churches to accept the Western rule, under threat of excommunication, in which measure he was supported by many foreign bishops. But the supremacy of Rome was not then acknowledged, and the Asiatics answered this lordly summons by the pen of Polycrates, Bishop of Ephesus, who declared in their name that they would not depart from the customs they had originally received by Apostolic authority.

Victor pronounced the unjust sentence of excommunication; but it only sufficed to cut his own Church from communion with the East, the other Churches refusing to acknowledge his power or right to pronounce so arbitrary a sentence.

The progress of this sad dissension was happily averted by the wise remonstrances of Irenæus. He was well qualified to settle the dispute; for although brought up in

the East, he had become the bishop of a Western Church, and had cheerfully conformed to the national usage of his diocese. In consequence of this his arbitration reconciled the disputants, and the Easterns continued to observe their distinctive customs until the Council of Nicæa, A.D. 325, when the Eastern use was abolished, and uniformity of practice prevailed throughout the Christian world.

During his stay in Rome, Irenæus met a former associate, one Florinus, who had been his fellow-pupil under Polycarp, and found, to his great grief, that he had fallen into deadly heresy, having embraced the dualistic principle, which taught the co-existence of two equal deities, the one good, the other evil, thus anticipating the later teaching of Manichæism. Grieved at the fall of his former companion, he strove in vain to reclaim him; but was forced to leave Rome, on his return to Lyons, with the work unaccomplished.

Returning in safety to the flock he had left, he was elected by the unanimous voice of the Faithful to succeed Pothinus, the disciple of S. John, in the See of Lyons, and had no choice but to accept the post of dignity, but of danger.

Thence he wrote a loving letter to Florinus, yet preserved to us, reminding him of their familiar intercourse as boys under Polycarp, and how from his lips they had both learned the teaching of S. John, and others who had seen the Lord in person.

This appeal to earlier and better days failed, alas! in its effect. Florinus was indeed partially reclaimed, but fell away again under the false teaching of one Valentinus,

of whom we have already spoken as the greatest of the Gnostic teachers.

In a synod held at Lyons censure was pronounced against the doctrines of Valentinus, and his fellow-heresiarch Marcion; and a portion of a treatise written by Irenæus on the occasion yet survives, known as "The Book of the Ogdoad."

In the course of this work he appeals to the uniform tradition preserved in the Apostolic Churches, and, commenting upon the consent of the Episcopate, says: "We can name men whom the Apostles made bishops in the several Churches, appointing them their successors; and most certainly they would deliver those mysterious secrets of Christianity, which they themselves possessed, to those to whom they commended the Churches, leaving them as their successors with the same power and authority they enjoyed themselves."

The Episcopate thus established, became the bond of unity between Churches widely severed by distance, so that Christians leaving one portion of the empire, were commended by letters from their own bishop to the bishops of the most distant provinces in which they might desire to travel or to settle, and thus the brother from Britain would find a ready welcome under the burning sun of Africa or of Syria.

Irenæus is supposed to have ruled the Church in Gaul until the death of the unhappy and dissolute Commodus plunged the Roman world into war, and finally led to the commencement of the *Great Fifth Persecution*.

During the lifetime of this abandoned youth, a woman

named Marcia, who had great influence over him, protected the Christians. At last she found her own name in a list of the victims whom he intended to sacrifice to his cruelty, and, anticipating the result, poisoned the emperor.

The virtuous Pertinax was appointed his successor by the Prætorian guards; but after eighty-six days they murdered him, being tired of his virtues, and in the excess of their insolence offered the empire for sale to the highest bidder.

One Didius was rash enough to accept the opportunity, but was only permitted to enjoy his purchase for three months, which he spent in inordinate luxury, ere he was also murdered, and the empire was contended for as a prize by three famous generals, Severus, Niger, and Albinus.

Outside the gates of Lyons, of which city, as we have seen, S. Irenæus was bishop, the final battle was fought between Severus and Albinus. There was a most terrible struggle. Albinus was killed after a desperate defence, and his troops fled. It is said that the river Rhone, on whose banks it was fought, ran red with blood.

The other competitor, Niger, had already been removed from the scene, and Severus was sole emperor. At once crafty and cruel, he secured himself upon the throne by destroying all those who were supposed to have favoured other competitors, and thus he filled Rome with bloodshed.

The Christians for some time were unmolested; indeed, they had some claim upon the forbearance of the emperor, who had been cured by a Christian slave of a most dangerous illness; but Severus was stern and cruel; he determined that the laws of the empire should be observed.

But it was not till his return from a long and tedious progress through his dominions that his resolution was finally sealed, when he issued edicts bidding that the dormant laws should be put into instant operation; and thus he inaugurated the *Great Fifth Persecution* about the year 201. Owing to his determined character, his inflexibility, and his utter absence of compassion, there was no circumstance which could mitigate the severity of the edict. The law was carried out to the letter.

The storm fell at a very early period upon the city of Lyons; but there are few particulars preserved. The persecution was so intense and unsparing that it left few, if any, witnesses to record it, save the persecutors themselves.

All we know is, that in the tenth year of Severus a mighty celebration of Pagan rites, ceremonies, and games took place at Lyons. Nearly all the inhabitants were then Christians, but they were utterly out-numbered by the multitudes of Pagans who poured in upon them from the surrounding districts.

There can be little doubt that nearly the whole Christian population was ruthlessly destroyed; and although the record, which asserts that nineteen thousand suffered, is perhaps an exaggeration of later days, yet we may easily credit the tradition which asserts that the very streets ran with blood.

How Irenæus himself won his crown is somewhat uncertain; but he is generally believed to have died by the sword in this cruel massacre, which took place in the year 202.

Alexandria appears to have been another focus of this

persecution, and to have furnished a large addition to the noble army of Martyrs.

Amongst the earliest victims in that city was a citizen named Leonides, the father of the famous Origen—famous both as a philosopher, and for his life-long sufferings for the faith of Christ.

Writing to his father in the prison, the heroic boy bid him "Take heed, father, that you do not change your mind for our sake." The father did not, but died the death of the martyr, leaving behind him a wife and seven children.

A pious Christian lady educated Origen, the eldest of the seven.

But the most touching story connected with the Fifth Persecution is that of Perpetua and her companions, who suffered at Carthage, which is preserved to us in a narrative partly written by the Saint herself.

She was a catechumen, or candidate for Baptism, only twenty-two years of age, lately married, with an infant at her breast.

Her father begged and implored her with tears to save herself and him from dishonour and misery; but she was inflexible, although his pain was the saddest of all her sufferings to the affectionate daughter. While in prison awaiting trial she was baptized with her companions in tribulation, Revocatus, Felicitas, Saturninus, and Secundulus, praying earnestly for the grace of endurance. Perpetua suffered much in the miserable inner prison from the heat and the darkness, and especially from the ceaseless pain of anxiety for her infant. Two deacons had given money to the gaolers to be merciful to the captives,

and the poor mother thus was allowed to see her child, and at last to have it with her, when, she says, "the prison became a palace."

Praying for a vision, she saw a ladder of gold reaching to heaven, but around it swords, lances, and hooks, to tear the flesh of such as should ascend, while a dragon at the foot menaced the ascent. Quelling it in the name of Christ, she ascended in safety, and found herself in a happy region, where a good Shepherd led his flock in green pastures. She interpreted the vision as an omen of her approaching victory through death.

Once more her father sought her in the prison, and a sad and painful scene followed. The old man in his agitation bowed his grey hairs to the very dust, imploring his child to show pity upon him, and to recant. Truly this was the worst trial of all.

The day of the examination came, and the unhappy father so disturbed the proceedings that the procurator ordered him to be beaten with rods, Perpetua feeling the pain as if, she says, the blows had fallen upon her own shrinking form. The trial ended, the accused were condemned to the beasts.

A few days later, while praying earnestly, she found herself naming her brother Dinocrates, who had died at the age of seven, and who appeared to her in a vision, as in a state of suffering. She prayed until she was comforted by a vision of the child in a place of light and refreshment, and then, she says, she understood that he was translated from sadness to joy. It must be remembered that prayers for the increase of light and joy to the

Faithful departed then formed a place in every Christian Liturgy.

The martyrs were kept for the birthday of Geta, the son of Severus, who had now been associated with his father in the government. Meanwhile Secundulus died in prison. Felicitas in the interval gave birth to a child. Crying aloud in the pangs of travail, an attendant asked her, if she could not bear this, how would she act when exposed to the beasts? "*I* bear this," she replied; "but then Christ will suffer within me, and bear it for me."

The night before their sufferings a singular custom was observed, that of giving a feast to the sufferers about to be executed. This feast the martyrs accepted, but turned it into a resemblance of the Agapæ or Christian love feast. The people pressed to gaze upon them. "Yes, mark our faces," said Saturninus, "that you may know us when we meet at the final judgment."

Led forth to the Amphitheatre on the morrow, their worn and pallid faces were suffused with joy. They were required to wear the old heathen dresses of Phœnician origin peculiar to Carthage, and retained from the time when human sacrifices were customary; but they pleaded that they died in order to escape these things, and their objection was admitted.

The men were exposed to lions, bears, and leopards; the women to a mad cow. Perpetua appeared as if she felt no pain, but was in perfect peace; she had been tossed by the furious beast, and had swooned, when, recovering herself, she asked when the beasts would come, and could hardly believe that *that* part of the trial was over. Then she and



her sorrowing companions, giving each other the last kiss of peace, were led forth, one by one, to the centre of the arena and slain by gladiators. The gladiator who was appointed to slay Perpetua was a mere boy, and misdirected his sword, but perceiving his agitation she directed the sword herself towards a vital part, and thus breathed forth her soul to God.

The affecting narrative of the martyrdom of the slave Potamiana, at Alexandria, must not be forgotten. She might easily have purchased safety by the sacrifice of her honour, but refusing, was condemned to be cast into boiling pitch. As they were preparing to strip her, she begged to be allowed to retain her garments, and obtained the boon at the price of being lowered inch by inch into the caldron. Her agony lasted three hours, and her constancy was the cause of the conversion of one of her executioners. Truly in her case was strength made perfect in weakness.

Towards the close of this persecution the great Catechetical School at Alexandria was now ruled by Clement, as a theological school in preparation for the ministry of the Church, and furnished many victims for God.

Clement, who was a man deeply versed, not only in Christian theology, but in Greek philosophy, was forced to leave the city, and the school passed under the care of Origen, who remained there throughout the persecution.

How he escaped can hardly be conceived. He stood by his pupils in several instances while they suffered martyrdom, exhorting them to constancy. He was hunted by the mob from street to street, and from house to house. He suffered hunger and cold, with every other privation, as

he fled from hiding-place to hiding-place, yet ever emerging at the call of duty.

But his life was preserved by Divine Providence, until the death of the emperor put a period to the Fifth Persecution.

In the year 208 Severus, though far advanced in years, set out for Caledonia, with his sons, Caracalla and Geta. He entered the Highlands, and penetrated to the extreme north; but his joy at his successes was damped by the unnatural behaviour of his sons, one of whom, Caracalla, even attempted to assassinate his father in the sight of the army.

Returning to York, the aged emperor died of a severe fit of the gout, in the sixty-sixth year of his age, and the eighteenth of his reign, A.D. 211.

Before quitting this period, it seems necessary to give some further account of the great and learned Tertullian.

Quintus Septimus Florens Tertullian was born at the great African city of Carthage, his father being probably a Roman centurion under the proconsul of Africa, who educated his son in all the learning of the day; so that he became familiar with poets and orators, as also with philosophy, law, and mathematics.

His conversion is supposed to have taken place in the earlier years of Severus. He had observed the miraculous power over pain and agony given by the Faith of Christ, the pure lives of the brethren, the fulfilment of prophecies, and the miraculous phenomena then attending the spread of the Gospel.

These circumstances first attracted him ; but the living power of the life of God within the soul, which succeeded his baptism, rendered him an enthusiast in the cause of truth. He gave up everything the world could offer him, and publicly proclaimed his conversion to the despised sect of the Nazarenes.

In these days he wrote his first apology for the Christians, in which he defends them against the charge of impiety, and from the popular scandals, alleges the innocence of their lives, and denounces the cruel injustice of the laws against them. He points out the uselessness of attempting to crush the Church by persecution. "The more we are mown down by you," he says, "the more we spring up. The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church."

He points out that, although of yesterday, the Faith had penetrated even beyond the bounds of the empire, and draws from its vitality a magnificent argument for its truth and supernatural origin.

The preaching of Montanus and his followers attracted Tertullian, probably owing to the very fact that the views chiefly advocated set forth the necessity of extreme asceticism and severity of life, condemning all avoidance of martyrdom by flight, and aiming at a standard of holiness almost, alas, unattainable below.

The more repulsive features of Montanism were probably kept in the background ; and Tertullian in an unhappy moment, when he had been treated with some harshness by the clergy of Rome, joined himself to their community, and became thenceforth an alien to the

Church. His example led many astray, and the sect was still surviving at Carthage in the days of S. Augustine.

It is not clear by what manner of death Tertullian died; he is said to have passed his sixtieth year. His best known works are his "Apology," his treatises "De Spectaculis," "Ad Martyres," &c.

There is, alas, a sad want of love manifested even in his earlier writings, before his secession. He glories in the coming destruction of the sinners, when he should rather follow the example of Him Who wept over Jerusalem. May not this want of love supply in some measure the explanation why "so great a star fell from heaven"?

Although the cardinal verities of the Faith "once for all delivered to the Saints" were held with firmness from the beginning, yet the contact of the Church with heathen philosophy was forcing the task of definition upon its spiritual rulers, and a development of doctrine in this sense was unavoidable. For instance, the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, mysteriously stated in Holy Scripture, had excited the scorn of many opponents, and the bewilderment of those who, with the frail powers given to the creature, sought to comprehend the Creator. This rendered it necessary for the Church to define exactly what she gathered from the Holy Scriptures as to the point in question; and heresy after heresy was divinely overruled for the confirmation of the Faith.

Two opposite errors were introduced by those who vainly sought to fathom the mystery of the *Three in One*, against which the Church had to define the Catholic Faith.

The *one* introduced by Theodotus and his successor,

Artemon, represented the Father alone as God, the Son as a man upon whom the Divine wisdom rested, and the Holy Spirit either as a creature or as merely a Divine influence.

The other, first introduced by Praxeas, an Asiatic, but with which the name of Sabellius, a presbyter of Libya, is for ever identified, maintained that the names Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are merely designations of the One Deity in different manifestations—the Father, when manifested as our Creator; the Son, as our Redeemer; the Holy Ghost, as our Sanctifier. Therefore, seeing that there was but one Person under three manifestations, it might be said that the Father suffered for our sins, a statement which led to the title of “*Patripassians*,” applied to some of the followers of Praxeas or Sabellius.

“God Himself,” said the latter, “is the monad, the one self-existent Being; revealed, He is extended into the Trinity.” He did not deny the use of the theological appellation “Person” as applied to the Son and Holy Ghost, but divested it of all meaning, rendering it equivalent to a “character assumed for the occasion,” hereafter to be relinquished when the work of Redemption was complete.

These heresies were condemned by various local synods and councils of the Church; but many generations had to pass away before the cessation of persecution permitted the meeting of general councils, before whose authority they finally withered away.

We have already mentioned the Catechetical School of Alexandria in connection with the Decian persecution,

when it furnished many a recruit to the noble army of martyrs, but it merits a more extended notice at our hands.

The people of Alexandria, inheriting many of the peculiarities of their Greek ancestry, had ever given great attention to philosophy, and their researches in this direction were not free from much extravagance of thought and language.

It was but natural, therefore, that Alexandrian Christianity should be somewhat influenced by this tendency, and the Catechetical School, originally, according to tradition, founded by S. Mark as an institution for the instruction of catechumens, had now become a higher school for the intellectual training of the clergy, or others whose gifts led them to seek instruction in the principles of Christian philosophy.

Pantæus, a convert from the Stoic philosophy, its master in the beginning of the second century, was a most devoted and also talented man. He seems to have felt that the Gospel must be clothed in a more intellectual and philosophical dress, if it was ever to make its way in Greek communities, and therefore he looked upon the Greek philosophy, especially that of Plato, which the unlearned Christians rejected as the work of the evil one, as an instrument ordained of God to prepare the Hellenic race for the reception of the Gospel, even as the law had been a schoolmaster to bring the Jews unto Christ.

The same method was pursued by his great successor, S. Clement of Alexandria, and pushed even to a further extent by Origen, who succeeded S. Clement, even to the

verge of heresy. The great danger of the school was a tendency to exaggerate the mystical signification of Holy Scripture, especially of the historical portion of the Old Testament, to the depreciation of its literal and moral sense. The method had been previously employed upon the Old Testament by the Alexandrian Jew, Philo, and it led many writers, not merely to exalt the mystical sense, but to treat the history as a series of parables, not necessarily true in their plain and literal meaning.

Yet the Church owes much of her intellectual pre-eminence to this school of thought, to which it is also owing that philosophy has become the handmaid, not the foe, of theology.

While the Christians of Alexandria were thus arming themselves with the weapons of their opponents, the Pagans in turn borrowed from them. Feeling it impossible to contend successfully with the Gospel, unless the corrupt moral teaching of mythology were discarded, they endeavoured to reform Paganism itself, maintaining that the old heathen myths, rightly understood, would be found to contain all that Christianity professed of moral force and truth, in a purer and less barbarous form.

Ammonius, commonly known as Saccas, or the Sack-carrier, was the founder of this school, during the reign of Severus, and its doctrine became known as "Neoplatonism," under which name it superseded, by degrees, almost every other form of Pagan philosophy. It had great attractions for the many, whose proud spirits shrank alike from the corruption of the heathen world and the humiliation involved in a profession of Christianity; and so it

lingered on for many generations. Its last influential teacher was the ill-fated Hypatia, of whom we shall hear in a future chapter; and after her death it died of inanition. The human race had done with it, and the last shadow of the graceful Greek mythology faded away.



## CHAPTER VI.

### FROM THE ACCESSION OF CARACALLA AND GETA TO THE DEATH OF DECIUS.

A.D. 211-251.

SEVERUS was succeeded by his two sons, Caracalla and Geta, who reigned jointly until the former slew his brother in his mother's arms, impatient to reign alone. After a reign of seven years, during which he was guilty of great cruelty, and on one occasion slaughtered half the population of Alexandria in cold blood because they lampooned him as a parricide, he was assassinated at the instigation of one Macrinus, who succeeded him.

The family of Severus, deprived of their dignities, were forced to take refuge in the East, particularly Mœsa, the sister of the late empress, who took up her abode at Emesa, with her two daughters, Scemias and Mammæa.

The son of Scemias, Elagabalus, assumed the character of the natural son of Caracalla, whose memory was dear to the soldiers, whom he had enriched by the spoil of his victims. They revolted in favour of his supposed son. Macrinus fell in battle, and Elagabalus ascended the throne. He was, perhaps, the most infamous of all the tyrants, who ruled the Roman empire. Cruel as Nero or Domitian, he surpassed even them in his shameless lewd-

ness. He introduced the worship of the Syrian deities into Rome, especially of those whose attributes were the most abhorrent to human nature. Indeed, his whole life was a prolonged offence against the laws of God and of nature, until he was murdered, in a popular tumult, in the arms of his mother, Scemias, who shared his fate. A stone was then fastened to his body, and it was thrown into the Tiber.

His cousin Alexander, the son of Mammæa, succeeded him (A.D. 222), and for thirteen years ornamented the imperial throne by his virtues.

During his youth the government was chiefly directed by Mammæa, who corresponded with Origen, and is supposed by some writers to have been herself a Christian. Not only did Alexander give toleration to the Faith, but placed the statue of Christ in his private temple, amongst those of others, whom he regarded as teachers and benefactors of the human race. Farther than this he never proceeded in the way of truth. Still, Christianity flourished under such encouragement, and the first *public* edifice for Christian worship, of which we have any record, was solemnly dedicated to Almighty God. Admitted to such public toleration, the services of the Church took place in open daylight, and the Faithful began to lose the name of "Lucifugæ," or "Shunners of the light."

The daily life of Alexander, as we read in his biographies, was somewhat similar to that of his noble predecessor, Marcus Aurelius. He rose early, and passed some time in his private temple, meditating upon the examples of those whose statues ornamented the building. His day was

divided regularly between public business, necessary gymnastic exercise, and philosophical reading. When his palace was open to his subjects, the herald was heard proclaiming, "Let none enter these holy walls unless conscious of a pure and innocent mind." He gave his whole application to the business of the state, and, in short, discharged with singular zeal and success the duties of his exalted station. But his very virtues were as obnoxious to the legions, who really governed the empire, as the effeminate vices of his cousin had been. They wanted a ruler, who would multiply executions and proscriptions, and divide the spoil amongst themselves, so they became daily more inimical to the rule of the gentle Alexander.

Accordingly, while he was leading the army against the German tribes, who were harassing the frontiers, they broke into his tent at the seventh hour of the day, and with many wounds assassinated their virtuous and confiding prince, raising a brutal giant, named Maximin, a Thracian barbarian, of enormous stature, to the imperial throne, a wretch whose sole qualification was his brutal courage and military virtues (A.D. 235).

He filled Rome with blood and slaughter, and commenced what is commonly called the "*Sixth Persecution*," simply, it is supposed, because the Christians had been the friends of his murdered predecessor. The virtuous Mammæa perished, and many Christians, including two successive Bishops of Rome, Pontianus and Antherius, suffered martyrdom, while the churches, which the Christians had erected, were destroyed by fire.

The senate of Rome revolted against this inhuman tyrant, and elected Balbinus and Maximus emperors to oppose him, the result being that Maximin was slain by his own soldiers under the walls of Aquileia.

His rivals did not long survive him. The Prætorian guards assassinated them both, and Gordian, an amiable boy of sixteen, whom the soldiers called their child, the senate their son, and the people their delight, succeeded to the throne.

The persecution ceased, as did also the civil oppression, under which the state had laboured; and for more than five years the Faithful had rest, until the breaking out of war called the young emperor to the Persian frontier. At first the Romans were successful, but a reverse of fortune provoked a mutiny, and the emperor was slain at the early age of nineteen. The soldiers, regretting their violence, gave him all funeral honours, but elected the chief instigator of the revolt, commonly called Philip the Arabian, who had been a Prætorian prefect, to succeed him.

On his return to Rome, after concluding a treaty of peace with Persia, Philip rested awhile at Antioch. Here, we are told by Eusebius, he sought to enter the Christian Church on Easter Eve, being favourably disposed to the Christians; but Babylas, the bishop, forbade his entrance beyond the spot set aside for the penitents, and told him that he could only be permitted to unite with the Faithful after penitence and confession.

It is said that he obeyed cheerfully; but it is certain that his allegiance to Christianity was very slight, for on his return to Rome he celebrated the secular games, com-

memorating the supposed thousandth anniversary of the foundation of the city by Romulus, with all the magnificence of Pagan worship.

But his day of grace was short. The soldiers of Mœsia and Pannonia invested Decius, a soldier of eminence, with the imperial purple, and the rivals met in battle, near Verona, where Philip was defeated and slain, and Decius became emperor.

It was under this emperor that one of the most severe trials she had ever sustained befell the Church, commonly known as the *Seventh Persecution*. Like Philip, we are told that he attempted to enter the Church at Antioch, and was resisted by Babylas, but with very different results from those which had followed in the case of Philip. Decius caused the bishop to be apprehended, and, together with three young boys whom he had educated, he gained the crown of martyrdom, saying almost with his latest breath, "Behold, O Lord, I and the children Thou hast given me." The emperor's attention being thus unfavourably attracted towards Christianity, he resolved to persevere in his opposition, and to exterminate the doctrines which taught men to despise the powers of this world in discharge of their duty to God. Hence he published edicts throughout the whole empire, commanding the various magistrates to appoint a day in every town, wherein inquisition should be made concerning the belief of each individual, that those, who did not comply with the national rites and customs, might be discovered. A day was accordingly appointed in each city, and courts, composed of a magistrate and five assessors, were formed,

before which all the citizens were summoned to appear, and to offer the accustomed rites, all such as obeyed receiving a certificate to testify that they were free from suspicion. Such as refused were immediately subjected to tortures more terrible than any which had been previously employed.

Multitudes, forewarned, fled from their homes at the commencement of the persecution, and sought refuge in the mountains and deserts, where they died from hunger, thirst, and disease, or perished by the violence of robbers or wild beasts in the remote wildernesses bordering the empire.

The deserts of Africa and Asia were full of fugitives; while those who remained had to undergo the most severe torments which the malice of their enemies could inflict—the stake, the wild beast, hooks to lacerate, scourges to tear, red-hot iron chairs, and all that could terrify or inflict agony.

The reader will not wonder that, in so fearful a trial, many were found faithless. Forty years, almost free from persecution, save the brief one under Maximin, which had been of very partial extent, had increased the multitude of believers; and hereditary Christians, who had been baptized in their infancy, were now more numerous than converts. It was observed that it was these hereditary Christians who chiefly failed under the heavy trial, while the converts, as a rule, stood firm in the Faith, and astonished the beholders by their wondrous constancy.

Many magistrates in pity to the Christians, or sometimes from avaricious motives, exempted them from

sacrifice, provided they would sign a certificate, testifying falsely that they had already offered the legal worship. Many thus saved their lives at the expense, not perhaps of apostacy, but of truth, and were known as the *libellatici*; while others, without signing the certificate, obtained the surreptitious insertion of their names in the register of those who had sacrificed, and were known as the *acta facientes*; but both these modes of escape were condemned by the Church. Those who had sacrificed were known as the *Sacrificati*, and those who had simply offered incense before the heathen deities as the *Thurificati*. Alas! it is not for us to speak severely of the "lapsed;" so heavy a trial is beyond our comprehension, and we can only marvel as we read of the heroic endurance of the martyrs. Those who fell away appear to have been terrified, not by death, but by the aspect of those dreadful and lingering agonies by which death was preceded, which a barbarous magistracy had prepared, in order to crush what they deemed obstinate disobedience to the law.

Hence, in all the provinces of the empire, for the space of two years, multitudes of the Faithful suffered all the torments which devilish ingenuity could invent. A letter written by Dionysius, Bishop of Alexandria, and preserved by Eusebius, will best serve as an illustration of the sufferings of the Church at that unhappy period.

"The persecution with us did not begin with the imperial edict, but preceded it a whole year. A certain prophet or poet excited the heathen against us, stirring up their superstitious imaginations, so that they considered they did their dæmons (gods) service by slaying us, and took

full liberty to exercise all manner of wickedness. In the first place, seizing a pious old man named Metra, they bade him utter blasphemies, and when he refused to do so, they beat him with clubs, pricked his face and eyes with sharp points, and, leading him away to the suburbs, stoned him to death.

"Then they found one of the Faithful, a woman named Quinta, whom they dragged to a temple, and endeavoured to compel her to worship. She turned away in sadness and horror, whereupon they seized her, tied her by the feet, and dragged her through the city, dashing her against the hard stones, until they had brought her to the same place where Metra had died, when they stoned her also.

"Then they assailed the houses of the brethren, carrying away all that was valuable, and burning what they did not thus carry away, in the public roads, so that the city looked like a place taken by storm. After this they seized that admirable and aged virgin, Apollonia, and first breaking all her teeth with heavy blows, they kindled a large fire, and told her they would throw her into it unless she would repeat their blasphemies.

"First she seemed to shrink, but suddenly gathering courage she leapt into the fire, and became a burnt sacrifice to the Lord. Then they seized Serapion in his own house, and after inflicting upon him many cruel tortures, threw him headlong from an upper story. And so it came to pass that there was no street, no lane, no by-way where we could walk without the utmost danger; for, seizing all whom they suspected, they forced them to utter their blasphemies or burnt them.



"But when the edict arrived, it seemed as if the very elect would stumble. Many, alas! gave way; others were drawn by intimate friends to the place of sacrifice, and were bidden by name to offer to the idols. And they stood there pale and trembling, equally afraid to offer or to die; while others, alas! apostatized, boldly declaring they had never really been Christians. Some gave way after bonds and imprisonment; some after cruel torture and mockery; but others, like firm and blessed pillars in the heavenly temple, loved not their lives unto the death.

"The first of these was *Julian*. He had been afflicted by the gout, and could neither walk nor stand; so they carried him with one Cronion, a faithful brother, on camels through the whole city—a very large city, as you know—and finally, after cruelly scourging them, burnt them alive on an elevated place in the sight of a great multitude.

"Many others likewise suffered. A soldier named Besas, who had withstood the insolence of the multitude towards these servants of God, was himself beheaded; while another, a Libyan by birth, was burnt, after enduring much solicitation from the judge to renounce his Faith.

"And then Epimachus and Alexander, after they had been grievously tortured by the scourges and the iron scrapers, were destroyed in an immense fire; and with them four women. Ammonarium, whom they had wearied themselves to torment, because she would not utter their blasphemies; the aged Mercuria; and Dionysia, the mother of many children, whom she tenderly loved, but loved the Lord better still. . . . .

"And with these Dioscorus, a boy of fifteen, was de-

livered up. At first the judge, pitying his youth, endeavoured to seduce him by fair words; but failing, he had recourse to tortures, which equally failed, whereupon he dismissed him, after delivering the others to the fire, because he was wise in his answers, and illustrious in the eyes of the people; therefore he is yet among us, awaiting a more severe conflict. . . . .

“Why should I mention the multitudes who have wandered in deserts and mountains, perishing by hunger and thirst, by the teeth of wild beasts, or by frost and disease; the survivors are witnesses of their election and their victory. Chæremon was a very aged bishop of the city called Nile. He and his partner, fleeing into the mountains, have not returned, neither can the brethren learn aught concerning them, though frequent search has been made. And many have been carried off as slaves by the barbarous Saracens to the same mountains. Some we have ransomed with difficulty, others yet remain undiscovered. These facts I have stated, not without an object, but that you may see how great an affliction has befallen us.”

The Church at Smyrna, famous during the great Fourth Persecution for her constancy under suffering, and the glorious martyrdom of her bishop, Polycarp, had again to prove her constancy to the Faith under much tribulation. Eudaimon, the bishop, unlike his great predecessor, gave way under the dread of torture; but Pionius, a well-known and eloquent priest, became the leader of the Faithful when his chief had fallen.

On the feast of Polycarp, A.D. 250, after the celebration in honour of the martyr, Pionius was arrested in company

with two of the laity, Asclepiades and Sabina, by order of the magistrate Polemo.

The whole populace was kindly disposed to Pionius, and urged him to sacrifice, as did also the magistrates; and when other means failed, the victims were dragged by ropes to the temple, where the bishop, crowned with a chaplet, stood pale and trembling, to complete his apostacy by sacrifice. He, indeed, accomplished his fall; but Pionius and his companions remained firm, and boldly appealed to the law, which, they said, gave them the liberty to choose death rather than apostacy.

Pionius was therefore condemned to suffer, like Polycarp, at the stake, to which he was fastened with nails, according to the cruel custom in use at Smyrna. "I hasten to die, Lord," he said, "that I may rise with Thee." The fire was kindled, but he was so motionless that the people thought he had expired, until he gently opened his eyes, gazed at the fire, exclaimed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit," and died.

Meteodorus, who had been a follower of Marcion, shared his fate; but the lot of Sabina and Asclepiades is not certainly known.

S. Fabian, Bishop of Rome, also suffered martyrdom in this persecution. His election to the see had been marked, so tradition states, by a singular occurrence. While the brethren were assembled in the Church for the purpose of electing a successor to Anteros, a dove, suddenly appearing, rested upon the head of Fabian, who was but a visitor from the country, and the whole body, thus reminded of Pentecost, exclaimed, "He is worthy!" and placed him almost

by force on the Episcopal throne. The Bishops of Rome occupied the post of highest dignity in the West, but also of greatest danger; and, like the majority of his predecessors, Fabian gained the crown through suffering, but the particulars of his martyrdom are not certainly known. It is said that he suffered on the 20th of January, A.D. 250, and was buried in the cemetery of Callistus, on the Appian Way.

But space would utterly fail us, did we attempt to give an exhaustive account of the martyrs, whose glorious victories have been handed down by tradition. The whole empire was the scene of their suffering and their glory, until it pleased God to remove the persecutor, and to chastise the Roman empire.

The Goths had made their first appearance in southern regions. Leaving their original homes, in the half-frozen regions of Scandinavia, in search of more fertile lands, they had rested awhile in Eastern Germany, until, moving southward, they appeared on the shores of the Euxine sea, an innumerable host, fierce and warlike.

Here they came into collision with the Roman occupants of the province of Dacia. Disdaining to till for themselves, they preferred to reap the harvests others had sown. Dacia being utterly depopulated, they crossed the Danube 70,000 strong, and appeared under the walls of Marianopolis, the capital of Moesia. The inhabitants consented to ransom their lives with their property, and the ferocious invaders retired for a season.

But while Decius was still directing the fury of the Seventh Persecution, intelligence reached him that Cniva,

king of the Goths, had passed the Danube a second time with immense forces, and was devastating the whole province of Mœsia.

Decius, who, whatever his faults, was a brave soldier, and understood his duties as an emperor, marched in person against them with all the forces he could collect in the emergency. He found them besieging Nicopolis. At his approach they raised the siege, and retired to lay siege to a larger city, Philippolis, near the foot of Mount Hæmus. Decius followed. But when the Goths were still supposed to be retreating, they turned with fury upon their pursuers, and for the first time a Roman emperor fled in disorder before an army of half-naked barbarians.

The Goths besieged Philippolis, which, destitute of succour, fell into their hands, after a gallant resistance, and they massacred the whole population, in number one hundred thousand.

The time, however, consumed in this tedious siege had enabled Decius to collect another army; and the Goths, exhausted by the siege of Philippolis, in which the flower of their troops had perished, again retreated.

They were overtaken and surrounded by the Roman forces, whereupon they offered to surrender all their booty and prisoners, on promise of a safe and unmolested retreat. This Decius sternly refused to grant, being determined to avenge the blood they had shed, and to strike a salutary terror into their countrymen.

Preferring death to slavery, they drew up in three lines near an obscure town of Mœsia, called Forum Terebronii, their third line protected by a morass. In the beginning

of the action the son of Decius was slain by an arrow in the sight of his father, who, summoning all his fortitude, reminded the soldiers that the loss of a single warrior was of little importance, and bade them fight on. The combat was terrible; it was that of vengeance against despair. At length the first line of the Goths was destroyed; the second, coming up to succour it, shared its fate; whereupon the Romans, flushed with victory, charged the third, and became entangled in the morass, where, after an ineffectual struggle, they were utterly lost; nor could the body of Decius ever be found.

Such was his fate in the fiftieth year of his age; and so ended the *Seventh Persecution*.

The great and learned Origen departed this life immediately after the cessation of this Persecution. Released from prison, his aged and emaciated frame sank under the effect of the sufferings he had endured, and he entered his eternal rest at Tyre in the year 253.

A brief sketch of his life and labours may not be inappropriate in this place. Born, as we have seen, in Alexandria about A.D. 186, he lost his father, Leonides, in the persecution under Severus, when he was only fifteen years old.

Educated by a pious lady who had adopted him, his extraordinary talents led him to be appointed successor to S. Clement, as the head of the Catechetical School in Alexandria, at the early age of eighteen. We have already commented upon his wonderful preservation during the persecution under Severus.

Once the Egyptian priests even seized him, and having shaved his head after their manner, bade him, if he would live, distribute branches of palm to the worshippers of Serapis. Standing upon the steps of the temple, he cried aloud, as he presented the branches, "Come and take the emblem, not of Serapis, but of the martyrs of Christ."

At the same time he practised the utmost austerity of life, learning in all things to endure hardness as a faithful soldier of Christ, while he gave his whole leisure to meditation and prayer.

At the close of the persecution, he visited Rome during the pontificate of Zephyrinus, and, returning, found that his fame had attracted so many pupils that he was forced to associate Heraclas, a former pupil, with him in the duties of the school. Many of the heathen were attracted by his wondrous learning, and coming to seek the wisdom of this world, unconsciously imbibed the Faith.

The cruelty of Caracalla, who, as we have seen, ordered a general massacre at Alexandria, because the inhabitants had reproached him for the murder of his brother Geta, drove Origen and several of his pupils into exile. While at Cæsarea he was permitted to expound the Holy Scriptures in the Church, although as yet only a layman; but this act displeased his own diocesan Demetrius, who recalled him, after an absence of two years, to his labours in the Catechetical School.

Here he compiled the greatest literary work of his life—"The Hexapla"—consisting of six versions of the Holy Scriptures arranged in parallel columns. The column containing the corrected text of the Septuagint was transcribed

by Eusebius, and still remains, although "The Hexapla" is lost. By his great learning he recalled many of the Gnostics to Christianity. His fame even reached Arabia, and he was solicited in vain by an Arabian king to come and evangelize his people. After this he was called to Antioch to instruct Mammæa, the mother of the Emperor Alexander, in the rudiments of Christianity.

Shortly after this, while passing through Palestine, he was ordained priest by Theoctistus of Cæsarea and Alexander of Jerusalem, which excited the anger of Demetrius of Alexandria, and led to much bitter controversy, owing to an act of Origen committed in an excess of zeal in his early days, which it was supposed had incapacitated him for the priesthood.

And it must be added, that the extent to which he pushed the allegorical system of interpretation had led to much which savoured of heresy, in the opinion of many synods of the Church; and many, who utterly wanted his holiness and zeal, pushed his reasonings to conclusions which were heretical; but however Origen might err, he was utterly wanting in the spirit which makes a heretic.

Condemned generally in the West, he was received with the utmost favour in the East. He took up his residence at Cæsarea, where he published his Commentaries on the Scriptures, and obtained many pupils, notably Gregory, the future bishop of New Cæsarea, known afterwards as *Thaumaturgus*, or the wonder-worker.

He frequently engaged in controversy in defence of the Faith, and even made a long journey to Arabia for the purpose of reclaiming an erring bishop from his errors. It



was at this period that he wrote his Apology, in answer to Celsus the Epicurean; and from Cæsarea he also corresponded with the Emperor Philip, who was, as we have seen, favourably inclined to Christianity.

Here, during the Decian persecution, he was arrested, thrown into prison, put repeatedly to the torture, confined in a loathsome dungeon, yet providence still seemed to deprive him of the glory of the martyr's death; the persecution ceased as the former one had ceased, and left him yet alive.

But the suffering had been too great for his enfeebled frame, and he died at Tyre, in the reign of Gallus, in the seventieth year of his age, having, like S. Timothy, served the Lord from his youth. He had led the life of a martyr, although his lot was not cast with the martyrs in death. The volumes he left behind him were very numerous. S. Jerome says, "He wrote more than any other man could read." They were destined to become the fruitful source of future controversy.

Unlike preceding persecutions, the Decian persecution had found the Church unprepared, and many sad instances of weakness had been found in the Christian body. Between the days of Tertullian and those of S. Cyprian, the discipline of the Church had been greatly relaxed, and, in consequence, Christians had somewhat departed from the high moral standard they had once maintained. A spirit of toleration had again arisen, which led many to think highly of Pagan customs, and to extend a charity towards Pagan worship which ill fitted them for the coming struggle, and insensibly prepared them to think

death a price too great to pay for non-conformity to those customs they had been endeavouring to extenuate.

Nor was the theological aspect of affairs much brighter. The errors of Montanism were spreading; the Gnostics, adopting generally the theories of Valentinus, presented a more compact body of opponents to the Church; and the only great theologian amongst the Christians had been Origen, whose own works contained, alas! the germ of future heresy.

But the heavy trial had come, and it had left the Church, after the deadly conflict of two years, partially purified, yet not completely; and the difficulties consequent upon the existence of multitudes of the lapsed, of "Libellatici, Thurificati, and Sacrificati," were pressing upon the Episcopate. A fiercer struggle was close at hand, and the respite of the Church was but a short one.

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE DAYS OF S. CYPRIAN, AND THE VALERIAN PERSECUTION.

THE broken remains of the Roman army, after the terrible defeat, in which Decius had fallen, gathering together, proclaimed Gallus, the governor of the province, emperor. He had no choice but to make a disgraceful peace with the Goths, leaving all the captives and spoil in their hands, and consenting to pay them a large tribute annually.

He then started for Rome, where he ruled for a few months with great mildness and equity, until the Goths, heedless of treaties, invaded Moesia again, and were defeated in a great battle by Æmilianus, whom Gallus had left as the governor of the province. Contrasting the energy of the governor with the supineness of the emperor, the soldiers proclaimed Æmilianus emperor, and without any delay he led them towards Rome.

Gallus sent to bid his lieutenant Valerian to hasten to his aid with the legions of Gaul and Germany, but before their arrival he encountered his adversary. The result was tragic but decisive. The troops of Gallus, perceiving that they were weaker than those of Æmilianus, murdered

the emperor and his son, and the whole army proclaimed Æmilianus emperor in his stead.

Four months had passed away, when Valerian, the most renowned soldier of the time, entered Italy with his troops, too late to save his master, but not too late to avenge him. The troops of Æmilianus, overawed by the foe, repeated the former experiment with equal success. They murdered Æmilianus, and proclaimed Valerian emperor in the sixtieth year of his age.

Valerian began his reign amidst general approbation. He was affable, just, and generous. Never, says Eusebius, quoting Dionysius, was any emperor more favourably disposed to the Christians than he appeared at this period. "All his house was filled with the pious, and resembled a congregation of the Faithful."

But he fell, unhappily, under the influence of one Macrianus, the master and chief ruler of the Magi, and, by strange fate, the prætorian prefect; and this worthless favourite used every artifice to persuade Valerian to renew the persecutions. The heathen priests throughout the empire were no less solicitous. They multiplied omens and prodigies; they appealed alternately to the patriotism and the superstition of the emperor. Every earthquake or pestilence—and it was a period of great public calamities—was, as usual, interpreted as the token of divine anger against those who tolerated the atheists, as they called the Christians.

Valerian yielded at last, and a most severe edict inaugurated *The Eighth Persecution*, in the year 257. It was followed, the year after, by one still more severe;

and, in consequence, a considerable number of the Faithful suffered death, by the most terrible modes of torture, in all provinces of the empire. Even such as yielded under their torments, simply exchanged death for slavery, contrary to the former practice; and, indeed, the terrible scenes under Decius were surpassed in horror by those perpetrated under the instigation of Macrianus.

The most prominent of the Christian bishops of this perilous time, was S. Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage, a man who has left his mark on the whole Church, and who yet lives in his writings.

Thascius Cæcilius Cyprianus was born at Carthage, of a noble family, about the year 200, and spent his earlier years as a teacher of rhetoric, in ignorance of the light of the Gospel. He was converted in the forty-fifth year of his age. His deacon and biographer, Pontius, tells us that the conversion was miraculous, no less in its suddenness than in its completeness, but gives us no details of the event; stating that a man's actions should be traced, not from the first birth, but from the second, in the laver of Baptism. "In him," says the biographer, "all things incredible met together; the threshing anticipated the sowing, the vintage the tendril, the fruit the root."

But it is evident from a passage in his treatise, "*De Gratia Dei*," that even when sunk in the dissipation of fashionable life, he had frequently had thoughts of becoming a Christian, feeling the emptiness of worldly pleasures, and their inability to satisfy the soul. Cæcilius, a priest, whose name he adopted, seems to have been his spiritual

father. But his path once chosen, it was chosen for life, and he halted no longer between two opinions; he had literally put on Christ; old things had passed away, all things had become new. He sold his gardens near the city, a delicious retreat, where he had often found shelter from the bustle of the world. A few months later he became a priest, and two years after the see of Carthage became vacant, when all eyes were turned upon him. He concealed himself in his house, such was his reluctance to accept the proffered dignity, and would fain, Pontius informs us, have escaped through the window. But his retreat was prevented: he was literally seized by the Faithful, carried off, and made Bishop of Carthage in spite of his sincere "Nolo Episcopari" (A.D. 248).

The position of the Church was then very deplorable. The forty years of peace, as we have already seen, had led to great laxity of discipline, and a general intrusion of the world into the precincts of the Sanctuary; while, in the disorganization which had ensued, great divisions, and even in some few instances scandalous crimes, had crept in. Cyprian set about his work of reformation with great energy and decision, although he was grievously opposed by a factious minority, consisting of five priests, who had opposed his election to the see.

But a fiery trial was at hand, which thoroughly purged the Sanctuary.—*The Seventh Persecution*—under Decius, which we have already described, and the bigoted and infuriated Pagans, thirsting for blood, hailed the imperial edicts with delight.

The number of apostates was as great at Carthage,

as we have seen it at Alexandria, under Dionysius. Multitudes either sacrificed or became *Libellatics*; but degenerate as the Church was, many were yet found who sealed their Faith with their blood, or wandered in the deserts of Libya, destitute, afflicted, tormented.

The cry, "Cyprian to the lions," was raised so constantly by the mob, that his friends, with gentle violence, compelled the bishop to obey the precept, "When they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another." He found refuge in a retreat at no great distance, and his property was confiscated.

During his retirement he kept up a constant correspondence with the afflicted members of the Church, writing no less than 395 letters, many of which are still preserved to us. He did more by his absence than many would have done by their presence; superintending and directing everything; exhorting the Faithful with all the energy of his own serene and intrepid soul, glowing with disdain of the world, and with a hope full of immortality, so that he inspired many with a sublime ambition to cast off their earthly tabernacles, that mortality might be swallowed up of life.

But when the death of Decius restored peace for a few short years to the afflicted Church, a great difference arose respecting the treatment of the lapsed. There were, alas! multitudes of all the three classes—*Sacrificati*, *Thurificati*, and *Libellatici*.

Those who had stood firm in the midst of so many and so great dangers were lauded with an enthusiasm which proved dangerous to many ill-balanced minds, and men

who had endured agony and shame seemed less able to endure the temptations to pride which beset them afterwards.

The lapsed flocked to the maimed and mutilated survivors, entreating their influence in procuring reconciliation with the Church; and many exhibited recommendations to mercy, which they had obtained from the martyrs in prison, before the final victory in the Amphitheatre.

The authority of the Episcopate was seriously threatened through these ill-judged efforts on the part of the surviving confessors. One Lucian, who had been condemned to death by starvation, and had been saved by the cessation of the persecution, seemed in particular to imagine that he carried the keys of heaven in his girdle. By virtue of his own sufferings, and those of the martyr Paul, who had given him a commission before sealing his testimony with his blood, Lucian actually granted, or professed to grant, reconciliation to all the lapsed who applied to him, utterly irrespective of the authority of the Church, and signified to S. Cyprian that "he had granted peace" to the persons in question.

Cyprian's position was a very invidious one; the exercise of his authority at such a juncture in opposition to mercy—*ill-judged* mercy—was sure to expose him to misrepresentation.

But he was not the man to flinch from his duty for the sake of popularity. Writing to the Roman Church, he obtained the concurrence of the authorities there in the course he meant to pursue for the preservation of discipline. The Episcopal office was, as he felt, the very keystone of the



earthly temple, the continuance upon earth of the Apostolate; to suffer it to be set at nought was to be traitorous to Christ.

Things came at last to a crisis through the conduct of one Felicissimus, who threatened excommunication to all who should withstand the authority of the confessors (*i.e.* the martyrs in will), and obey the bishop. Cyprian at once replied by the actual excommunication of Felicissimus, which he had richly merited, not only for his insubordination, but for his actual crimes.

Hereupon the schismatics seduced some questionable bishops to ordain one Fortunatus to be their bishop, a presbyter named Novatus being the chief mover in the affair, who left Carthage before its conclusion, and induced one Novatian to set himself up in similar opposition to Cornelius, the successor of the martyred Fabian at Rome. Three bishops, seduced to Rome under false pretences, were induced to ordain Novatian, who proceeded to ordain bishops, after his own heart, for the African sees, and laid the foundation of a considerable schism.

So completely did these schismatics withdraw from the position first assumed by Novatus, that they denied absolution to the lapsed in general, and even, like the Montanists, to the Faithful who had fallen into deadly sin after Baptism.

Thus Cyprian was attacked by two opposite parties, both arising from the deeds of Novatus—the one accusing him of laxity, the other of severity.

Between the two opposite errors he steered so true a course, that the great body of the lapsed submitted them-

selves to their bishop, and committed the direction of their spiritual interests entirely to him.

Cyprian's treatise on the "Unity of the Church," in which he strongly condemns the sin of schism, was written at this juncture. Many have thoughtlessly condemned the apparent harshness of its tone; but perhaps they have not sufficiently considered the character of the circumstances under which it was written; a less vigorous and decisive course might have then been fatal to the interests, almost to the existence, of the Church in Africa. Bleeding at every pore from the cruelty of her heathen adversaries, she did not deserve that the dissensions of her own children should accomplish her ruin.

But one of the most fearful calamities of that age, so fruitful in catastrophes, was gathering, and about to fall on Roman and Barbarian, Pagan and Christian, alike—"The Great Plague."

This fearful visitation overspread the Roman world, and was one of the most fatal recorded in history. At Carthage the dying were deserted in their last agonies, the dead lay unburied in the streets, the ties of nature were forgotten, and children thrust their stricken parents, or parents their children, forth to die.

In this awful crisis the Church awoke into life, and by its ministrations of mercy gladdened the plague-stricken city; Christians were found at the pillows of the dying, whom the nearest earthly friends had forsaken; Christians bent their ears to catch the last words issuing from the infectious breath of the sufferer, or whispered into the plague-stricken ear the tidings of a brighter and better

world; Christians tended the widows and orphans, visited them in their affliction, and buried their dead.

Cyprian was the life and soul of these efforts of mercy. He arranged and ordered, as a general, the movements of this army of friends and consolers, while his thrilling pulpit eloquence filled with light and joy that sad atmosphere of sorrow and death; and through his teaching, the light affliction, which was but for the moment, brought to many the far more exceeding weight of glory. His work on the "Mortality," written at that time, is a marvellous effort of eloquence, and the nature of the disease may be gathered from the following passage:

"This sad affliction of the suffering body, which exhausts the system by an internal flux, which causes fire in the very marrow of the bones, which breaks forth in ulcers upon the jaws, which shakes the bowels by continual retchings, which renders the eyes bloodshot through fever, and causes the feet or hands to fall away through mortification, so that through this consumption and mutilation of the body, motion is impeded and sight is lost, is indeed a profitable exercise for our Faith—that Faith which enables us to stand with unshaken soul amidst these scenes of desolation and death, unbending amidst the ruin of the human race, instead of sharing the prostrate condition of those who have no hope in their God."

No shade of gloom indeed darkened his courageous spirit. He concludes the book by picturing the bliss of paradise, the Christian's "*patria*" (fatherland), where the noble army of martyrs and saints stretched out their hands to welcome the voyager safe home, after being tossed on life's

tempestuous sea. Such was indeed the glorious hope which nerved him both to do and to suffer, and made his example yet more efficacious than his noble precepts.

The plague passed away, and Carthage resumed its wonted aspect. A controversy ensued upon heretical baptism, which Cyprian pronounced *invalid*, while Stephen, Bishop of Rome, maintained its *validity*. Stephen acted with great arrogance, and excommunicated Cyprian, who simply ignored the excommunication. The question was afterwards decided against S. Cyprian's view by the eighth canon of the council of Arles (A.D. 314), which directs that Baptism, administered in the name of the Trinity, shall be considered valid, even when administered by schismatics.

But the end of this eminent servant of God was drawing nigh. When the persecution, commenced by Valerian, at the instigation of Macrianus, reached Africa, S. Cyprian was carried at once before the proconsul, Paternus, and after defending himself with Christian courage, was banished to Curubis, a town on the sea-coast, where he was suffered to remain unmolested, with his deacon, Pontius, for about eleven months. At the end of that time he was recalled from banishment by Galerius Maximus, the successor of Paternus, and allowed to occupy the gardens he had once sold for the benefit of the poor, but which had been restored to him through the liberality of his friends. He determined now to leave Carthage no more. His work was done, and he felt that the crown was very near—the crown of martyrdom.

The second and severer edict of Valerian was now issued,

and S. Cyprian prepared for the worst that man could inflict. Fearing, however, that he might be carried to Utica, during the temporary absence of the proconsul, he hid himself till the return of Galerius, when he appeared in his gardens as usual, and withstood all entreaties to save himself by flight. On the thirteenth of September, A.D. 258, he was apprehended, and conveyed to Sexti, a place six miles from Carthage, whither the proconsul had gone for the recovery of his health.

He was treated with singular respect by the authorities, which perhaps he had gained by his well-known behaviour during the pestilence; while the little town was thronged by Christians, eager for the safety of their bishop, all differences of opinion being now lost in the common trial.

On the following day Cyprian was led forth; and being desired earnestly by the proconsul to sacrifice, firmly and steadfastly refused. There was no alternative for Galerius, and he reluctantly pronounced the sentence of decapitation. The bishop received his doom with thankfulness, and a cry arose from the Christians around, "Let us also die with him."

They conducted him without delay to the place of execution, a level sward, surrounded by trees, the branches of which were soon occupied by his devoted followers, who climbed up that they might witness their leader's triumph over death.

He knelt for a short time in earnest prayer, then rising, took off his upper garment, ordered twenty-five gold pieces to be given to the headsman, and bade him do his office quickly; then covering his face, he awaited the fatal stroke.

The sword flashed in the sun, there was a dull, heavy fall, and all was over. So passed away one of the brightest and bravest of the many heroes of the Church Catholic.

In the same year, Xystus, Bishop of Rome, and his Deacon, S. Laurence, received the martyr's palm. Xystus was originally an Athenian philosopher, but embracing the brighter faith of Christ, became eventually Bishop of Rome.

Being seized by his enemies, and refusing to sacrifice, he was led to martyrdom, when his deacon Laurence followed him, crying out, "Father, whither goest thou without thy son? priest, why goest thou forth without thy deacon? thou art not wont to offer sacrifice alone."

"Be of good cheer, my son," replied the bishop, "I do not desert thee. A more glorious conflict than mine awaits thee; meanwhile sell all thou hast committed to thy charge, and give to the poor: within three days thou shalt follow me."

They led Xystus to the place of execution, and there beheaded him. S. Laurence returned homewards alone, where he found a summons from Macrianus, the prætorian prefect already mentioned, awaiting him.

Macrianus had heard that the Church possessed great treasures, which were under the care of S. Laurence, as archdeacon; and when Laurence stood before him, he told him that he simply required the treasures of the Church, which were useless to Christ, and should be given to the emperor, according to the precept of which he had heard, "Render unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's."

S. Laurence appeared to consent, and required three days to collect the riches, which Macrianus most readily conceded. Returning home, the archdeacon melted down all the gold and silver vessels of the Church, and distributed the money to the poor; then on the third day, when Macrianus sent to receive the promised treasure, S. Laurence simply presented to him all the poor Christians he could assemble, in number many hundreds, telling the prefect that these were the true riches of the Church.

Macrianus was furious, and ordered the Saint to be roasted slowly to death upon an instrument resembling a gridiron, beneath which live coals were placed. Throughout the lingering agony he showed no sign of suffering; his face was calm and placid to the last. And thus, as it had been foretold, he glorified God by his death. S. Augustine and other writers record miracles which are said to have happened at his tomb; but the greatest and most self-evident miracle is the constancy of the martyr.

The acts of S. Fructuosus, Bishop of Tarragona, and his companions,\* have been preserved, and afford another vivid illustration of the times.

They may be thus abridged—

Valerian and Gallienus being emperors, on January 16th, being the Lord's Day, Fructuosus, the bishop, Augurius and Eulogius, the deacons, were taken. The bishop was in bed, but hearing the footfall of the soldiers, he came forth barefoot. "Come," they said, "the governor wants thee." He replied, "Suffer me first to put on my shoes."

\* See them at length in "Lives of the Saints." By the Rev. S. Baring-Gould.

They suffered him. Arriving, they were cast into prison, and brought forth on the sixth day, Fructuosus having spent the interval in unceasing prayer, glorying in the crown to which he was called.

Æmilian, the governor, interrogated him.

"Hast thou heard the orders of the emperors?"

"I do not know their orders; I am a Christian."

"They have ordered that the gods be worshipped."

"I worship one God, Who made heaven and earth."

"Dost thou not know that there are many gods?"

"No, I do not."

"Then thou shalt know soon."

The bishop began to pray mentally, while the governor added, "Who will be feared, who adored, if the emperor and the gods are despised?" Then turning to the deacons, he examined them, and finding them constant also, he turned to Fructuosus again.

"Are you a bishop?"

"I am one."

"You *were*," replied the governor, and ordered them all to be burnt alive.

But the bishop being brought forth with his deacons into the Amphitheatre, the people mourned greatly; for he was beloved for his charity even by the heathen. They offered him spiced wine to drink, but he would not, being the fast of the sixth day (Friday). When they had reached the spot, one Augustalis, a lector (or reader), besought the bishop with tears that he might unloose his shoes, but the blessed martyr bid him stand aside, and unloosed them himself. He indeed went to the stake as to his crown which should



fade not, rather than as to the pain of the fire. "This which ye behold," he said, "is but the weakness of one hour." So the fire was kindled, and the flames burnt the bands wherewith their hands were tied, whereupon, rejoicing, they cast themselves on their knees, and making the sign of victory (the cross), they departed to be with the Lord.

Similar instances may be collected in abundance from existing records, but those we have given may suffice.

The time was very short; for the vengeance of Him, whose suffering members had been thus cruelly entreated, was at hand. Calamities beset the empire on all sides. The barbarians broke through the frontiers on every hand. Pestilence and disease united with famine, and the misery of the period became intense beyond comparison.

But *one* event stirred up the Roman government to vigorous exertion. The old Persian monarchy had been revived under able and warlike monarchs, who had shaken off the Parthian yoke; and Sapor, the present king, announcing his intention to restore the empire of Cyrus, invaded the Roman province of Mesopotamia, and laid siege to the frontier Roman garrison of Nisibis.

So important a place does Persia henceforth fill, both in secular and ecclesiastical history, that it appears necessary to give a detailed account of the steps by which she attained such pre-eminence as to entitle her to dispute the Empire of the East with Rome, and in some degree to prevail.

Since the destruction of the Persian empire, as founded by Cyrus, beneath the resistless arms of Alexander the Great, five centuries of bondage had been the lot of the

unhappy Persians; firstly under the Seleucidæ, the descendants of Seleucus, one of Alexander's generals, and finally under the Parthians, who drove the degenerate successors of Alexander from all the provinces of Upper Asia, at the same time in which the Romans subdued Asia Minor, and fixed the temporary limit of their mighty empire at Mount Taurus.

The dominions of the Parthians extended from the frontiers of Syria to those of India. They were a warlike but tolerant race, and both Jews and Christians enjoyed peace and toleration in the great river cities under their sway, until their empire fell in its turn, and the old Persian monarchy revived upon its ashes.

The last Parthian king, Artaban, had in his army a general named Artaxerxes, who boasted himself a descendant of Cyrus, but had risen in the Parthian ranks from the station of a common soldier.

His descent and his abilities at last excited the fears of Artaban, and his death was determined upon, when he sought safety in desperate counsels, and raised the standard of rebellion in the name of the ancient royal house of Persia.

A desperate struggle ensued, for the Persians rose at his call. The Parthians were defeated in three great battles, with prodigious slaughter, in the last of which Artaban was slain, the spirit of the oppressors utterly broken, and Artaxerxes proclaimed king.

His kingdom was nearly identical with modern Persia; for in the three or four centuries of Parthian domination Rome had pushed her conquests far beyond Mount Taurus,

had wrested Syria and the whole territory west of the Euphrates from the Parthian grasp, and finally, only ten years before the fall of that dynasty, had subdued Mesopotamia, and made the Tigris its temporary frontier.

But the victorious Persians, once more masters of their own land, were not contented with any arrangement which did not restore to them the ancient dominions of Cyrus, then, from the Tigris to the Mediterranean, in Roman grasp; and the history of the following generations is a history of abortive attempts to regain possessions lost for centuries, but endeared to them by the recollections preserved in history and tradition of the golden age of their race under the great Cyrus, whose history was so mingled with romance, that he appeared less like a human being than one of the demi-gods of the poets to the Persian imaginations.

Therefore four hundred young Persian warriors, in splendid apparel, were sent to bid Rome retire into Europe, and leave Asia to her natural lords. The Romans naturally did not see the justice of the demand, and war followed, with varying success. Under Alexander Severus the Romans penetrated Persia, and were repulsed; under his successors the Persians similarly invaded Mesopotamia, but could not retain it. Nisibis, the frontier garrison of Rome, was besieged over and over again; but always hitherto in vain, until, after a glorious reign of about fourteen years, Artaxerxes died, and left his empire to his son Sapor, who inherited all the talent and ambition of his mighty father, the founder of the Second Persian Empire.

It will now be readily understood, that when the tidings reached Rome that Sapor was advancing upon Nisibis, the Roman pride was fully aroused, and Valerian left Rome for the East, as the most important field of action; while the task of meeting the barbarians much nearer home was committed to his lieutenants, who had at the same moment to repress the Germans on the Rhine; the Franks, who had even traversed Gaul, and invaded Spain and Africa; the Alemanni, who had crossed the Alps into Lombardy, and sacked Ravenna; and last, but not least, the Goths, who had invaded Asia Minor, burning the famous temple of Ephesus, and had entered Greece, where they finally succeeded in taking Thebes, Athens, and Corinth, and advanced to the coasts of Epirus, within sight of Italy.

In the midst of all these calamities, Valerian led the flower of the Roman army to the far East—the onward march of the Goths was suspended, as the fated body passed the scenes soon to be desolated by Gothic hands—to win, as the Romans fondly thought, victory over a mightier foe than hosts of half-armed barbarians.

They passed Antioch, reached the deserts, and traversed them in safety. The Euphrates was gained, and no foe disputed their passage, much to their surprise. They entered Mesopotamia, and strove to surprise the Persians by a rapid march through a mountainous defile: were entrapped therein by the treachery of Macrianus. Advance and retreat equally hopeless, they had no choice but to surrender or die.

After a vain attempt to retrace their steps, during which they fought as desperately as the legions of Varus when

caught in a similar manner by the Germans, they were forced to yield, and a Roman emperor, with his whole army, became the prisoners and the sport of Sapor and the gratified Persians.

Their fate was a sad one—slavery in some cases; death, amidst cruel mockery, in others. The unhappy Valerian was borne about a captive, loaded with chains, and yet invested with the Roman purple, until death terminated his sufferings after a weary captivity, when his skin, stuffed so as to retain the likeness of humanity, was hung up in the temple of the fire-god, a perpetual insult to Rome.

Nisibis had fallen before the capture of Valerian, and Sapor brought the tidings of his own victory to Antioch. The Persians entered the doomed city while the inhabitants were in the Amphitheatre, and nearly the whole population perished.

The tide of Persian conquest swept over Syria, Cilicia and Cappadocia; their capitals, Taurus and Cæsarea, with many other cities, shared the fate of Antioch. Deep valleys were filled up with the bodies of the slain; crowds of prisoners perished for want of food or water; while, feeling his inability to retain Syria, Sapor sought simply to ravage and destroy, while he carried the inhabitants away into hopeless captivity.

It was computed by Gibbon, from authentic records, that during the miserable fifteen years, dating from A.D. 246, the supposed thousandth anniversary of the foundation of Rome, fully one half the population of the civilized world perished by sword, fire, famine, or pestilence.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### FROM VALERIAN TO DIOCLETIAN.

A.D. 260-284.

THE captivity of the hapless Valerian left his son Gallienus as sole emperor, and this unnatural son made no effort to deliver his father from captivity, taking, or pretending to take, comfort in the reflection, "I knew beforehand my father was but mortal."

So he abandoned himself to luxury and sloth, while Sapor devastated whole provinces, and pretenders to the empire rose up in all directions, to whom the fanciful name of the "Thirty Tyrants" has been given. Gallienus appeared perfectly contented so long as Italy was untouched. "Cannot we live at Rome," said he, "without linen from Gaul, or corn from Egypt?"

Yet this worthless voluptuary extended a general toleration to Christianity, recalling the exiles who had been banished on account of their religion, and restoring the use of the cemeteries, of which she had been deprived, to the Church. Thus Christianity became recognized as a "religio licita" or tolerated religion, and entered upon a long period of comparative peace, which lasted nearly forty years.

Yet it was still in the power of individual magistrates,

remote from the seat of government, to put the laws into operation; for they had not been formally repealed, and it was thus that the martyrdom of Marinus took place at Cæsarea.

The post of centurion becoming vacant amongst the troops posted at that city, Marinus, in the order of succession, was called to fill the vacancy, when the next in order objected that Marinus was a Christian, and by the law incapable of promotion. The accuser, therefore, claimed the post.

The superior officer interrogated Marinus, and upon his avowing himself a Christian, and refusing to sacrifice, gave him three hours for reflection. As he left the prætorium, the Bishop of Cæsarea, Theoctistus, drew him aside, and leading him to the Church, placed him before the altar. There he bade him make his choice between the sword and the book of the Gospels, which he presented before him. Without hesitation Marinus took the book. "Hold fast to God," said the bishop; "and strengthened by Him, go in peace." Marinus went forth, boldly announced his determination to abide by his Faith, whereupon he was sentenced to military execution and beheaded.

The reign of Gallienus lasted eight years, during which the condition of the Christians was rather tolerable than happy. But at length Gallienus was forced to take arms against a pretender named Aureolus, who had seized Milan; and, roused from his couch at night by the alarm of a sally from the town, was slain by his own troops, who proclaimed a brave general, named Claudius, emperor.

The state of the Church remained unchanged under the

short administration of Claudius, whose whole attention was given to the safety of the state, threatened again by the Goths, who invaded Greece in prodigious numbers. Fortune smiled upon the arms of Rome once more, and the Goths received so grievous a defeat that they were finally forced to surrender at discretion. But the pestilence which had followed the carnage proved fatal to the emperor, and he died at Sirmium, naming Aurelian his successor, A.D. 270.

The laws against Christianity having fallen into disuse, Aurelian saw no reason to depart from the policy of his predecessors. But the heathen priests and pagan philosophers, deprived of the weapons of persecution, began in earnest the controversial opposition to the Faith which Celsus had first initiated. The Platonic philosophers, following the example of Ammonius Saccas, adopted several of the institutions and doctrines of the Gospel, and endeavoured to frame a religion which should combine many elements of the new and vigorous Faith with the old and dying Paganism.

On the other hand, many writers took up an attitude of the bitterest hostility to Christianity. Chief amongst these we must place Porphyry, a Syrian by birth, whose long and laborious work was burnt by order of Constantine the Great, in days when the Faith he had reviled had become the Faith of the Court.

He was, however, rather a bitter than a formidable enemy, and had evidently not fairly studied the tenets against which he contended, while superstitious fancies rather than solid reasons abounded in his pages.



But, in spite of all opposition, the progress of Christianity was most rapid. The Goths, who had settled in Mysia and Thrace, received the first rudiments of Christianity, about this time, from certain Asiatic teachers, while the knowledge of the Faith was diffused throughout the whole of Gaul. Flourishing Churches now existed at Cologne, Treves, Metz, and other northern cities, while Britain was rapidly receiving the light of the Gospel.

Meanwhile a new empire, destined to a brief but not inglorious existence, had arisen in the East around the ancient city of Solomon, Tadmor, then known as Palmyra.

When Sapor retired from the devastation of Syria, bearing Valerian away as his captive, Odenathus, a citizen of that city, had avenged the sufferings of the unfortunate monarch, by his vigorous attacks upon the retreating Persians.

Separated entirely from Rome during the brief and inglorious reign of Gallienus, Odenathus was forced to depend upon his own personal resources, and, fresh from his brilliant exploits, became the founder of a kingdom and lord of Palmyra. Zenobia, the wife of Odenathus, was worthy of her husband, a woman of singular courage and chastity. Odenathus defeated the Persians in several battles, and was acknowledged by Rome as the Cæsar of the East, but in the height of success was treacherously assassinated by his own nephew. Zenobia avenged the murder, and, proving equal to the occasion, filled her husband's throne, governing Arabia, Armenia, Palmyra, and the East, in person for five years, with manly courage and wisdom. Her dominions, extending from the Euphrates

to the frontiers of Bithynia, were finally increased by the conquest of the Roman province of Egypt.

She blended the Roman and Oriental customs in her court, and educated her sons as the Cæsars of the East.

Situated at an equal distance from the Mediterranean and the Persian Gulf, Palmyra rapidly became the focus of Eastern commerce. Her gorgeous temples and palaces, covered the surface of a fertile oasis, extending many miles in each direction.

Zenobia was favourably inclined to Christianity, and not only tolerated, but supported it.

The bishop who possessed her confidence in the highest degree was Paul of Samosata, Bishop of Antioch, a man of great eloquence, and greater eccentricity.

Through the favour of Zenobia, he enjoyed a considerable civil office, and he chose to be honoured rather by the title of "ducenary," than by that of "bishop." In his public appearances he imitated the pomp and state of a Roman governor, and even affected similar display in his religious functions, erecting a tribunal in his Church, using the gestures of Pagan philosophers and orators, and encouraging his people to receive his sermons with the waving of handkerchiefs and the clapping of hands, as if they had been in the schools of the philosophers.

Discarding the grave music of the Church, he introduced secular compositions, with female singers, an innovation until then unknown; for the office of singer or chorister was considered one of the minor orders of the Church. It is even said that they sang hymns in his honour, but allowance must be made for some exaggeration.

It is certain, however, that against those who refused to flatter his vanity, or to submit to his power, he was inflexible, and even cruel, in the discharge of his secular and spiritual functions; that he lavished the treasures of the Church upon his own sensual gratification, and by indiscreet conduct gave occasion to much scandal. Naturally the heathen marvelled at this change in the outward aspect of the Christian ministry, and made many sarcastic remarks on the pride and luxury of the bishop.

It is not wonderful, that such a man should have corrupted the doctrines of the Church, in order to render them acceptable to the popular tastes, or to the inclinations of his royal mistress. He is said to have followed Sabellius in his general teaching, denying the distinction of persons in the Godhead. A council was assembled at Antioch, where, by his eloquent sophistry, Paul succeeded in hiding his real teaching from scrutiny, and so escaped excommunication. He promised that any abuses which he had permitted in his Church, or any erroneous teaching, should be amended; but, violating his promise, two successive councils were held, and the equivocation of the bishop fully exposed by the eloquence and determination of one Malchion, a priest. Excommunication and deposition naturally followed. Paul boldly refused to submit to his brethren, and appealed to Zenobia. The civil power was exerted on his behalf, and he was enabled to retain his see, so long as the power of Zenobia enabled her to protect him.

This was not long. Aurelian became emperor, and proved one of the most able rulers Rome had ever seen. The son of a peasant, he had risen step by step, until the lips

of the dying Claudius proclaimed him his most fitting successor. In the space of a few years he drove the Germans out of Italy; recovered Gaul, Spain, and Britain, from the usurper Tetricus; and finally, all other foes subdued, turned his attention to the empire of Zenobia. The contest was long, and even doubtful; but after two sanguinary battles, wherein both Aurelian and Zenobia were present, the queen was forced to fly, and to defend herself within the walls of Palmyra.

For a long time she defended the city with success, so that the Romans murmured at the length of the siege; but at length, provisions becoming exhausted, and succour being hopeless, Zenobia sought refuge in flight. Mounted on the fleetest of her dromedaries, she reached the Euphrates. A few moments would have placed her in safety, when she was overtaken by a squadron of light horse, and brought back a prisoner to Aurelian.

The conqueror treated her with respect, and granted favourable conditions of peace to the city, which received a Roman garrison. He returned to enjoy a triumph at Rome, and had already reached the Hellespont, when he received tidings that Palmyra had revolted, and that the garrison was massacred. He returned with swift promptitude, and inflicted the utmost rigours of ancient war upon the city and its population. The devastation was utter and complete. Fire and sword did their cruel work, and a desolate ruin took the place of the magnificent capital which had existed amidst the solitude of the desert.

Zenobia, who had been spared this dreadful scene, was reserved to adorn the triumph of the conqueror, after

which a villa was assigned, near Rome, as her residence, and her children became Roman citizens.

On the return of Aurelian from the conquest, a remarkable occurrence in the history of the Church took place. The dispute concerning her temporal possessions was, for the first time on record, referred to the civil government in his person. Deeply attached to the Pagan system, he yet gave the decision of a just judge as to the property. He decided that it should belong to that body of Christians in communion with the Church of the imperial city, and this judgment, thus pronounced, was enforced by the civil power. The followers of Paul became a heretical sect, whose baptism even was disallowed by the Church.

It was during the reign of Aurelian, that the sect of the Manichæans arose in Persia. There are many different accounts of the life and actions of Manes, its founder. He is said by some to have been a Magian, who embraced Christianity, and, falling from his first faith, introduced his new revelation in Persia, where, failing to conquer the Magians in dispute, he was condemned to a cruel death by Varanes, the successor of Sapor. His system was one of pure dualism. He maintained that there were two co-eternal and independent powers—the one good, the other evil; the one corresponding to the God of the Christians, the other taking the place assigned, in Christian theology, to the devil; the one purely spiritual, the other material. It would be useless to relate the fanciful and somewhat absurd stories of the wars between these two powers, as related by the Manichæans. Man was the result of the con-

flict, and inherited his spiritual nature from the one, his material nature from the other. There was no room in the system for the "Atonement;" the Divine soul could not be lost, the material body could not be saved.

To deliver the souls of men from their earthly prisons, God produced two Beings from His own substance, Christ and the Holy Ghost, and created the earth to be the scene of the conflict. In due time Christ descended upon it to preach deliverance, and the prince of darkness stirred up the Jews to crucify Him, which punishment however He only suffered in appearance. The promise of the Paraclete was fulfilled in Manes himself, who should guide the Church into all truth.

Those souls who rejected the God of the Jews, Whom Manes identified with the prince of darkness, and obeyed the laws of Christ and of Manes, would be eventually emancipated and saved.

The Manichæans were divided into the *elect* and the *hearers*. The "Elect" might not even feed themselves, but were fed by the "Hearers," who would incur the severest penalties after death in the case of neglect. The "Hearers" might eat flesh, drink wine, and engage in the usual occupations of life.

They had a hierarchy, consisting of seventy-two bishops, with priests and deacons under them. Their worship was studiously concealed from all outsiders, and the "mysteries" restricted to the "Elect."

This strange heresy would hardly deserve so much notice, had it not spread into the West, and even held captive for nine years before his Baptism, the mighty in-

telleet of S. Augustine. It revived in the middle ages amongst the Albigenes, and was ruthlessly crushed out in the crusade inaugurated by Pope Innocent the Third, and carried out by Simon de Montfort.

But we are anticipating our narration by centuries, and must return to the days of Aurelian.

Before his death, Aurelian became gravely prejudiced against the Church, and had issued edicts for a general persecution, in gratitude for his success in war, which he attributed to the heathen gods, when he was assassinated in his camp between Byzantium and Heraclea.

Having threatened his secretary, Menestheus, who had been accused of extortion, the criminal strove to save himself by drawing up a list, in imitation of his master's hand, of persons devoted to death, and included in the forgery the names of the principal officers of the army. Believing the traitor, they suddenly set upon their emperor, and he fell by the hands of Mucapor, a general he had ever loved and trusted. His death was no sooner accomplished than the conspirators discovered the forgery, slew Menestheus, and wrote to the senate, "The crime of one and the error of many have deprived us of the lamented Aurelian. May it please you, venerable fathers, to enrol him in the number of the gods, and to appoint a successor worthy of the Imperial Purple."

Thus was Aurelian deified, and the persecution averted for a few brief years; yet, as the edicts were issued, and some, it is said, had suffered martyrdom, it received the ill-chosen name of the *Ninth Persecution*.

The senate of Rome chose Tacitus to succeed Aurelian ; but unfitted by his age and habits for military life, he sank beneath the fatigues of an Asiatic campaign, and the constant anxiety arising from the mutinous character of the soldiers, after a short reign of only six months. His brother Florianus lost his life in a vain attempt to secure the succession, and the general of the East, the heroic Probus, grasped the reins of government.

He delivered Gaul from the terror of the Germans, and recovered seventy flourishing cities which had fallen under the power of these barbarians. He drove back the Franks into their morasses, passed the Rhine, and even entertained the idea of reducing Germany to the condition of a Roman province. Such an event, however, was not in the design of Providence; the Germans ever preserved their independence.

But at length, after a glorious career, Probus perished, like so many of his predecessors, by the hands of his own soldiers, whom he had compelled to labour in the draining of some morasses, in the intervals of their warlike occupations. Carus, the prætorian prefect who succeeded (A.D. 282), carried the Roman arms into the territories of Persia, and, in the midst of his triumphs, was killed in his tent by lightning. The affrighted soldiers refused to continue the campaign, and, leaving the astonished Persians to recover their losses, returned to their own dominions.

Carinus and Numerian, the sons of Carus, succeeded, but never saw each other after their father's death. Numerian was returning slowly from the Persian campaign, in which he had accompanied his father, when he died at Heraclea, on the Propontis—it is supposed that he



was murdered by Aper, his father-in-law, who, concealing the death of the emperor, continued to give orders to the legions in his name. But at length the soldiers suspected the truth, and, rushing into the imperial tent, found only the corpse of Numerian. They dragged Aper in chains to a general assembly of the army at Chalcedon, and chose Diocletian, the commander of the imperial guards, as the judge. Ascending the tribunal, Diocletian solemnly raised his eyes to the sun, and, as in the presence of an all-seeing Deity, swore that he was innocent of the death of the emperor. Then, assuming the tone of a judge, he ordered Aper to be brought before the tribunal.

"This man," he said, "is the murderer of Numerian," and, without giving Aper any opportunity of attempting to justify himself, or of asserting his innocence, he plunged his sword in the breast of the unfortunate prefect.

A charge, supported by such a proof, was admitted without contradiction; and the legions saluted Diocletian as emperor.

Carinus made a vain attempt to retain the throne, and, at the head of the forces of the West, advanced to meet Diocletian. The armies met on the Danube; the forces of Carinus gained the advantage, and Diocletian despaired of the purple and of life, when a tribune, whose wife Carinus had seduced, seized the opportunity of revenge, and buried his dagger in the heart of the adulterer.

The battle ended, and the legions of the East and the West acknowledged the authority of Diocletian.

The power of Rome had been now raised, by a succession of emperors, to the highest pitch; the barbarians were subdued, the Goths and Germans ceased to trouble the

frontiers; the Persians had yielded to the prowess of the Western arms, and all seemed to promise well for the stability of the empire.

But there were signs of fearful conflict between the dying Paganism and the living Faith of the Gospel. The most careless observer could but note them; and it promised with equal plainness to be the last—one for life or death—for Paganism.

The zeal and rapid progress of Christianity had half emptied the Pagan temples, while it had aroused the Polytheists from that languid indifference, in the cause of their deities, which had been hitherto fashionable. They were incensed at the rashness of the new sect, which disdained compromise, and whose doctrines consigned all unbelievers to eternal misery. Therefore they strained every nerve to revive the superstitions which had once held the many captive. Philosophy was called to aid the expiring faith—if faith it would be called—systems of morality were elaborated, and false miracles or supernatural portents produced to rival the acknowledged miraculous powers of the infant Church.

Elaborate treatises were composed against the Gospel, while the worship of the images in the Pagan temples was justified, as worship paid to existing, though unseen, deities: but all this availed them little, and their hopes rested upon the chance of another persecution, when all the might of the empire might be brought into action to crush the rising creed.

Such was the state of things at the accession of Diocletian, on the twentieth of November, A.D. 284.

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE GREAT TENTH PERSECUTION.

**D**IOCLETIAN was born at Dioclea, a small town of Dalmatia, in the house of Amulinus, a Roman senator, of whom his parents were the slaves.

It is probable that his father obtained the freedom of the family, and that he soon exercised the office of a scribe. His fortunate son adopted the profession of arms—the surest road to fortune in those days, when, as it has been repeatedly seen, meanness of origin was no obstacle to promotion.

The young soldier rose rapidly, and was successively promoted to the government of Moesia, the consulship, and finally to the important command of the emperor's body-guard, from whence, on the occasion of the death of Numerian, he planted his foot on the imperial throne, which he filled with consummate ability.

His courage was unquestioned, his abilities for business marvellous, while, on all occasions, save those in which Christianity was concerned, he displayed a lenity and mildness in striking contrast to his predecessors. His victory was signalized by a clemency unknown before;

none of the adherents of his adversary suffered in person, fortune, or honour, and the Roman world marvelled.

Feeling that the government of so large an empire was too mighty a task to be discharged with credit by one individual, he chose an associate in the empire, and found one in the person of Maximian, who, like himself, was of humble origin.

Maximian was a rude and unlettered soldier, but a very able general, possessing valour and experience, but insensible to pity, and utterly careless of the misery of others.

But a still further subdivision of the empire soon appeared necessary, therefore Constantius Chlorus, the father of Constantine the Great, was made ruler of Britain, Spain, and Gaul; and Galerius of the provinces on the Danube, each with the subordinate title of "Cæsar;" while Maximian assumed the special charge of Italy and Africa, and Diocletian himself of the Eastern provinces.

It was at this period that the well-known Carausius, a Menapian, having made himself obnoxious to the ruling powers, attached to his fortunes the Roman fleet, secured the barbarian pirates to his interest, and, seducing the legions in Britain, made himself an independent sovereign of this island, assuming the imperial purple.

When Britain was thus severed from the empire its loss was severely lamented. The Romans grieved over its rich pastures, covered with innumerable flocks; its woods free (as they said) from wild beasts; its fields of waving grain. But for the space of seven years Carausius possessed it; his fleets rode triumphant in the Channel; and under his command Britain, destined in after ages to be the

mistress of the seas, became in anticipation a great naval power.

But Carausius was assassinated by his first minister, Allectus, and Constantius prepared to make a double descent upon the island. The præfect Asclepiodatus, under cover of a thick fog, escaped the fleet of Allectus, and landed in the west, while Allectus himself was posted near London, expecting the landing of Constantius in the south.

Hastening to meet the enemy, with troops exhausted by the rapidity of the march, Allectus was utterly defeated and slain, and Constantius, landing near Dover, found the shores filled with obedient subjects, who sincerely rejoiced in a revolution which restored their country to the unity of the empire.

Shortly afterwards a struggle arose between Rome and Persia, which effectually humbled the latter power, and avenged the misfortunes and death of Valerian. Galerius, who had conducted the military operations with singular courage and success, returned to pass the winter with Diocletian in Nicomedia, and the fall of Christianity became the subject of their deliberations.

Already there had been edicts issued, commanding all those engaged in military service to conform to the national religion, and the well-known story of the "Theban legion" must be referred to a period before the consultations in the palace of Nicomedia.

It is said that a whole legion, of six thousand Christian soldiers, was summoned to assist Maximian in the subjugation of the Gallic peasants who had revolted; that they discovered they were to be employed in the persecution of

their brethren, and when near the town of S. Maurice, situated in the Alpine valley between Martigny and the Lake of Geneva, refused to proceed. Twice decimated, they still remained firm, and told Maximian by the lips of their leader, S. Maurice, that they would die sooner than violate their duty to God. The other legions surrounded them, whereupon the devoted soldiers laid down their arms, and submitted without a struggle to martyrdom.

Such is the tradition. The foundation of truth is probably that certain soldiers did really suffer at this juncture, sooner than comply with the regulations affecting their religion.

It appears probable that the more humane temper of Diocletian led him to oppose the project of the persecution, but that the counsels of the fiercer Galerius, seconded as they certainly would have been by all the influence of Maximian, prevailed; and the character of Diocletian was such that, once committed to the policy of persecution, he would carry it out with the utmost determination, treating all resistance as rebellion.

A council, composed of the principal civil and military officers, was held in the palace of Nicomedia to discuss the question. It may be presumed that they insisted on every motive which could influence the mind of Diocletian; the danger of permitting a people, owning an independent allegiance to a mysterious King, to multiply in the heart of the empire; the calamities which the neglect of the worship of the heathen deities had brought, as they supposed, on the state; the silence of the oracles, which asserted they could give no responses while the Christians existed; the

hatred, as they alleged, of the destined victims to their fellow mortals; their contempt of the laws of the state, if in the least degree contrary to their religious feelings; and, in short, all the various calumnies and exaggerations, so easily repeated, and so readily believed.

But a still more powerful agent was used. The aid of superstition was invoked. When Diocletian came to consult a well-known oracle of Apollo, the response came, not from the priest, but from the god himself, in a hollow voice from beneath the ground: "Because of the righteous upon the earth, we are restrained from answering truly." "Who are these righteous?" asked the emperor. "The Christians," replied the priest.

The pleasure of the emperors was at last made known to the Christians, who had spent a melancholy winter full of apprehensions; for all the signs of the times were most threatening.

On the twenty-third of February, A.D. 302, at the dawn of day, the prætorian prefect, attended by a large staff of officers, repaired to the great Church of Nicomedia, situated on an eminence in the most populous part of the city. They broke open the doors, rushed into the sanctuary, burnt the sacred books, and by the incessant labour of guards and pioneers the sacred edifice, which had long excited the envy of the Pagans, was levelled with the ground.

The following day the general edict of persecution was published. It was moderated somewhat by Diocletian; for Galerius had proposed that every one refusing to offer sacrifice should be at once burned alive. Still the penalties were sufficiently severe for a beginning.

1. All who refused to offer sacrifice were to be deprived of their property, their rank, their political privileges.

2. Slaves were to be deprived of the hope of future liberty.

3. Christians of all ranks, losing the privileges of the Roman citizen, were to be liable to torture.

4. All Churches were to be razed to the ground.

5. All religious meetings prohibited.

6. All sacred writings committed to the flames.

No sooner was this edict posted up than it was torn down by a Christian, who uttered, at the same time, indignant words against the cruelty of the emperors. He was seized, and publicly roasted at a slow fire—the first-fruits to God of a mighty harvest; gathered, indeed, by the sword of the ungodly, but precious in His sight. His persecutors, zealous to avenge the personal insult to the emperors, exhausted every refinement of cruelty, but could not subdue his patience, or extinguish the heavenly smile which sat on his dying features.

The Christians openly commended his fortitude and his zeal, and thereby nourished a feeling of bitter personal hatred in the mind of the hitherto lenient Diocletian.

His fears, as well as his hatred, were speedily aroused. *Twice* within fifteen days the imperial palace, and even the bed-chamber of Diocletian, were in flames; and although the fire was extinguished without material damage, yet its recurrence was considered a proof that it was not the result of negligence. Of course the guilt was charged upon the Christians.

Diocletian was greatly enraged, and even alarmed. He



compelled his wife and daughter to set the example of offering sacrifice, and required every member of the household to imitate their example. Some of the most confidential domestics, who were thereby discovered to be Christians, were put to death with the most severe tortures, and Anthimus, the Bishop of Nicomedia, shared their fate.

The city was also polluted with innocent blood. Every mode of torture was put in practice to overcome the constancy of the Faithful, and terrify the beholders; while Galerius withdrew himself from the imperial palace, lest, as he said, he should himself fall a sacrifice to the rage of the Christians.

The persecution thus kindled extended rapidly throughout the empire. Churches were destroyed; the sacred writings, Scriptures or liturgies, sought for everywhere. Those who saved their lives by delivering them up were called "*Traditores*," and many suffered lingering agonies in their defence. In some cases copies of heretical writings, substituted for the Holy Scriptures, were taken in their stead; but many most valuable works were utterly destroyed, to the great and irreparable loss of ecclesiastical history.

A *second* edict, ordering the arrest of all the bishops and clergy, was speedily issued. A *third* edict, yet more severe, followed, directing that those who refused to sacrifice, should be tortured till they complied or died. A *fourth* edict extended the operation of the previous acts to all Christians whatsoever.

By this time the persecution was general throughout

the civilized world, differing in intensity according to the greater or less zeal of those who held the post of authority in the different provinces of the empire.

The mild and humane temper of Constantius was averse to persecution; yet so long as he occupied the subordinate station of Cæsar, he could not refuse compliance with the decisions of his superiors, and therefore, under his government, the proto-martyr of Britain, S. Alban, suffered at Verulamium.

He had concealed the priest Amphibalus when the persecutors sought him. God blessed the generous protector, and the seed sown by the teaching of the fugitive took deep root in his heart. Very shortly it became known that the priest had taken shelter in the villa of Alban, and the officers of justice sought him there.

Disguising himself in the long robes of the priest, Alban sent him away by a private door, and yielded himself up calmly to the pursuers, in the place of him from whom he had learned the way of life.

When brought before the judge he was immediately recognized, and professing himself a Christian, was sentenced to be decapitated, after they had striven in vain to induce him to save himself by consenting to offer sacrifice.

They beheaded him on a gentle hill without the town, where in after ages a spacious abbey was erected in his memory, and the modern town of S. Albans arose around the shrine.

But the victims in Britain were few. Amphibalus himself perished by cruel tortures shortly afterwards, and a few other names are recorded; indeed, the venerable Bede

informs us that a great number of both sexes, including Aaron and Julius, citizens of Chester, after enduring grievous torments, yielded their souls to God, to enjoy in the heavenly city a recompence for all the sufferings through which they had passed.

Such was the state of things even under the clement Constantius, of whom it is told, that, assembling his officers, he bade those who were Christians to resign their Faith or their military and civic offices. A certain number resigned their posts, but others their Faith, when he at once dismissed the latter also, saying that those who were unfaithful to their God would, upon compulsion, be unfaithful to their emperor likewise.

But in *Italy*, under the cruel Maximian, the fury of the persecution was intense, and it may be computed, without exaggeration, that many thousands suffered the utmost rage of the emperor, rather than renounce their Faith in Christ.

They were suspended by the feet over slow fires, stripped and suspended from hooks to expire in lingering torture, distended by the rack, torn by red-hot pincers, or the cruel iron scraper or rake. Molten lead was poured over them, sharp reeds thrust beneath the nails. The Amphitheatres were literally supplied with victims for the beasts; the basilicas, the so-called courts of justice, open all day for the examination and torture of the victims. Well is it written—

“For Thee all pangs they bore—  
Fury and cruel hate,  
The cruel scourge to tear,  
The hook to lacerate,

Empurpled in the flood  
Of their victorious blood,  
They won the laurel from their God."

It may be as well to chronicle the names and deeds of some of the better known amongst the martyrs, whose names have become household words.

*S. Sebastian* was a soldier of the emperor's body guard, born at Milan, and dear to Diocletian on account of his many virtues and heroic courage.

In his position he was able to assist the sufferers greatly. He visited them in prison, strengthened them by exhortation to endure to the end, and relieved their distress so far as he was able. These facts being reported to Maximian, the tyrant ordered Sebastian to be tied to a stake, and transfixd with arrows by Moorish archers.

Thus pierced by many wounds, he was left for dead, when a pious lady, Irene, conveying the body away for burial, found he yet breathed, and by her care he was restored to life.

Thus restored, so soon as his strength suffered, he threw himself in the emperor's way, and upbraided him with his cruelties. The result was obvious; he was beaten to death with rods in the emperor's presence. The Faithful, finding his body, buried it in the catacombs.

*S. Pancras*, the boy martyr, formerly well known in Britain, to whom one of our largest metropolitan parishes is dedicated, is said to have been himself the son of a martyr, to have torn down the persecuting edict in the Roman forum, and to have been exposed to a leopard in the Amphitheatre of the Colosseum.

The story of *S. Agnes* is a very touching one. She was only thirteen years old, and distinguished for her early piety. S. Ambrose tells us that her devotion was above her age, her courage above nature. She was sought in marriage while yet at school by the son of the prefect of the city, and refusing his advances, was accused by him of Christianity. Brought before her judge, they had no fetters small enough for her tender limbs, yet they subjected her to such torments that, as S. Ambrose again says, "she had no place left where the iron could yet inflict a wound, but she had *that* whereby she could conquer the iron."

Led at length to execution, the executioner trembled and hesitated to strike, but *she* trembled not. At length, by one blow, her head was separated from the body, and her soul dismissed to the heavenly mansions.

The Church of Rome of those days may well be called the Church of the Catacombs; for the Faithful were driven to worship God amidst the remains of the dead, where miles of subterranean passages afforded concealment, and Churches were excavated in which they met constantly for communion and prayer. Thus strengthened daily for the conflict, they came forth conquering and to conquer through their sufferings: the dawn was already at hand.

Here, in these subterranean Churches, they buried the mutilated remains of their martyred victors, and upon their tombs offered up the Eucharistic Sacrifice to the King of Martyrs. Even in these days those underground passages, still existing, are filled with the records of their sufferings and their triumphs.

But such victories were not confined to Italy and Britain; the persecution was co-extensive with the Roman empire. In Gaul *S. Quentin* stands distinguished amidst a crowd of victims, for the constancy with which he bore his sufferings.

In Spain *S. Vincent* has left an imperishable name. The acts of his martyrdom were read publicly in the African Church in the days of *S. Augustine*. He was a deacon of Saragossa, and in company with his bishop was brought before the ferocious *Datian*, governor of the province under *Constantius*. The bishop was exiled, and is supposed to have finished his course by martyrdom; but *S. Vincent* was racked, tortured with hooks, roasted upon a gridiron with bars sharp as scythes, and finally thrown upon a dungeon floor strewn with broken pottery to expire. We are told that his eyes were fixed on heaven, as if its glory were revealed to him, and that love stronger than death sustained him to the end. His body was finally thrown into the sea near the cape which bears his name, but, washed on shore, received the rites of Christian burial.

In the East the persecution was yet more fierce and vivid. The judges, says *Eusebius*, wearied themselves to find torments, as if prizes were offered to those who excelled the most in cruelty. In *Phrygia* a Church was surrounded by the soldiers during the celebration of the Sacred Mysteries, and set on fire, the whole congregation—men, women, and children, perishing in the flames. And it is said that the voice of hymns of praise was heard above the roaring of the destroying element.

But enough of these harrowing pictures, sad yet glorious, testifying as they do to the marvellous and supernatural power of Divine Grace.

It may be that there is some exaggeration in the accounts preserved to us, which even assert that twenty thousand suffered martyrdom in the course of the persecution. Still, making due allowance for this, enough remains to testify to the zeal with which Paganism made its last dying effort to retain the civilized world.

In the midst of the persecution Diocletian, as if weary of the task, abdicated the throne at Nicomedia, and retired into private life, compelling the reluctant Maximian to follow his example at Milan, A.D. 305.

## CHAPTER X.

### CONSTANTINE AND MAXENTIUS.

A.D. 305-312.

WE have now to relate the course of events which led to the overthrow of Paganism and the final triumph of Christianity. Fresh from the recital of the sufferings of the martyrs, we have to behold the Church victorious. Ten years from the persecuting edicts at Nicomedia saw an emperor a Christian by conviction upon the throne, and the persecutions had ceased for ever. We shall endeavour to trace the succession of events as clearly as possible which led to this wonderful result—wonderful, inasmuch as the possibility of the empire becoming Christian had hardly suggested itself to the Faithful a few years previous to its accomplishment.

Diocletian and Maximian abdicated the throne on the first of May, A.D. 305, and Galerius and Constantius thereby became emperors, with the title “Augusti.” Constantius immediately made use of his power to put an end to the persecution, while Galerius still continued to persecute in the East.

But two new Cæsars were to be appointed, and Diocletian had left the task to Galerius.



Passing by the natural candidates to this honour, Maxentius, the son of Maximian, and Constantine, the heroic son of Constantius; Galerius appointed two of his own creatures—Daza, afterwards called Maximin, to rule the East, and Severus to rule Italy and Africa, in subordination to himself.

This arrangement naturally gave the greatest offence to Maximian and Constantius; and, as we shall see, it was completely frustrated.

Constantine was the son of Constantius by his first wife, the Empress Helena, said to be the daughter of a British noble residing at Camalodunum (Colchester).

He was about eighteen years of age when his father acquired the dignity of Cæsar, but that promotion was attended by his mother's divorce, which was insisted upon by Diocletian from political motives.

Naturally Constantine severely resented this outrage upon his mother's happiness; and we find him accompanying Galerius in his Persian expedition instead of fighting by his father's side against Carausius and Allectus.

He rose rapidly in the army, and became a tribune of the first order. His figure was tall and majestic; intrepid in war, he was affable in peace; the follies of youth had little attraction for him; severely abstemious, he appeared insensible to the allurements of vice.

The popularity he had acquired in the army and amongst the people seemed surely to designate him as one of the future Cæsars, and the promotion of Maximin and Severus took all men by surprise.

Still he restrained his feelings, and the open favour of

the people so exasperated and alarmed Galerius, that he was studying how best to remove this dangerous rival from his path, when Constantius was taken ill, and, sensible of his approaching end, earnestly desired to see his son.

This was the last thing Galerius desired, and he interposed repeated excuses, while letter after letter arrived from Constantius to hasten the arrival of his son in his dominions. At last his permission was reluctantly granted; and before he could recall it or interpose further obstacles, Constantine started, in the dead of the night, from the palace of Nicomedia, and travelled with such great rapidity along the post-roads, which were then splendidly organized, that he outstripped the pursuers Galerius sent to detain him, and travelling *post* through Bithynia, Thrace, Dacia, Pannonia, Italy, and Gaul, reached his anxious father amidst the joyful acclamations of the people, just as Constantius was preparing to embark at Portus Itius for Britain to die.

Together the father and the restored son reached Britain, where Constantine conducted a successful expedition against the Caledonians, whom he easily subdued, and returned to find his father rapidly sinking. Constantius died in the arms of his son at York, on the 25th day of July, A.D. 306.

Immediately the legions saluted Constantine as emperor, thus justifying all the jealous fears of Galerius, to whom Constantine announced his elevation, sufficiently apprized that if he desired to live, he must be content to reign.

In his letter to Galerius, Constantine informed him of

his father's death, modestly asserted his natural claim to the succession, and lamented that the indiscreet zeal of the troops had not permitted him to consult the person whom he addressed.

Galerius had no choice. He dissembled his resentment, and although he threatened at first to burn both letter and messenger, he ended by accepting the son of Constantius as sovereign of Britain, Spain, and Gaul, with the subordinate title of Cæsar.

But another revolution still further disconcerted the plans of Galerius, and caused the persecutor yet further embarrassment.

The people of Italy were thoroughly exasperated with the course of government pursued both by Diocletian and Galerius, which had rendered Nicomedia the capital of the empire, and withdrawn the Augustus from Rome.

But they were touched in a yet tenderer point. Rome was no longer to be exempt from taxation; and after enjoying that exemption for nearly five hundred years, since the plunder of the Macedonian provinces, they were at last to be submitted to the exactions of collectors of the revenue. This was too much; they would bear it no longer, and they soon found a leader in Maxentius, the son of Maximian, who had been, as he thought, so unjustly excluded from the throne of Italy.

In the absence of Severus from the city, the populace headed by prætorian officers, proclaimed Maxentius emperor, and invested him with the imperial ornaments. Severus hastened to the city, thinking that he could speedily crush the insurrection, but found the gates shut

against him, and an experienced general, old Maximian himself, who had hastened to join his son, at the head of the rebels.

He retreated, or rather fled in dismay, to Ravenna, where he was pursued by Maximian, and forced to surrender on promise that his life should be spared. But the promise was badly kept. He found that he was expected to kill himself with the assurance of an imperial funeral, and opening his veins, ended his reign and his life, after the favourite manner of the ancients.

The indignation of Galerius, thus twice disappointed, knew no bounds: he assembled an army, and invaded Italy.

Maximian at once sought the alliance of Constantine for his son, against the common foe Galerius, and entered Gaul to solicit it, taking his daughter Fausta as a pledge of the alliance, and she was married to Constantine at Arles with great pomp and ceremony.

At the head of an enormous army, comprised of the legions of Illyricum and the East, Galerius entered Italy, as he said, to extirpate the senate, and give the people to the sword. But his amiable intentions were frustrated; he knew little of Rome; the whole nation rose against him; the fidelity of his legions became doubtful when he proposed to lead them against the mother city; and he saved himself, by a precipitate retreat, from the fate of Severus without hazarding a battle.

When he returned to Nicomedia, he associated his early friend Licinius with him in the empire of the East, and immediately Maximin, who misgoverned Syria and Egypt, also assumed the title of Augustus.

Thus there were at once *six* emperors:—

CONSTANTINE, ruling over Britain, Spain, and Gaul.

MAXENTIUS, over Italy and Africa.

MAXIMIAN, who shared the administrations of his son Maxentius, and his son-in-law Constantine.

GALERIUS, who governed the East, from Nicomedia.

LICINIUS, who ruled the Illyrian provinces, and MAXIMIN, who oppressed Syria and Egypt.

It was reserved for Constantine to restore unity to the empire, and to combine all these warring jurisdictions in one.

Death soon removed two of these monarchs, two of the most violent persecutors.

Maximian endeavoured, during the absence of Constantine, to seize the supreme power in Gaul, in conjunction with Maxentius; but being forced to take refuge in Marseilles, was besieged there by Constantine, taken prisoner, and given the same alternative he had himself given to Severus—to remove himself from the world in which he had acted so cruel a part, or to be removed. He chose the former, and strangled himself.

The other chief persecutor, Galerius, who had, as it will be remembered, instigated the great Tenth Persecution, perished by a most loathsome and lingering disease in his palace at Nicomedia. In his last illness he proclaimed toleration to the afflicted Church, and besought the prayers of the Faithful. We may be sure the petition was not made in vain.

By the removal of Maximian and Galerius from the scene, the number of emperors was reduced to four, of

whom Licinius made an alliance with Constantine, and Maximin with Maxentius, actuated, in each case, by mutual interests.

The administration of Constantine in Britain and Gaul is confessed by his adversaries, the Pagan historians, to have been distinguished by ability and leniency, so that those provinces enjoyed great prosperity, while the ill-fated Italians and Africans groaned under the tyranny of Maxentius, who, knowing no remorse, filled Rome with bloodshed, secure in the devotion of the prætorian guard, whom he had reorganized, and with whom he shared the spoil. The lives of the senators were exposed to his jealousy, the honour of their wives and daughters to his lust; the soldiers were the only persons he ever affected to please.

He spent his whole time in sloth and debauchery in the imperial palace, or the neighbouring gardens of Sallust, while he repeatedly exclaimed that he alone was emperor; the others were only his lieutenants, who took the fatigues of the government, while he enjoyed its pleasures.

Although Constantine sympathized deeply with the oppressed and plundered inhabitants of Italy and Africa, yet he was restrained, both by treaties and by prudence, from interfering with the government of his former ally, and it is probable that Maxentius would have lived and died unmolested, so far as Constantine was concerned, had he not forced a war upon his reluctant rival.

When Maximian had been forced to die by the commands of Constantine, whose act was little more than an act of self-preservation, Maxentius, who had persecuted

and deserted his aged father while alive, affected to resent his death. The titles of Maximian had been erased from public places, and his statues cut down. Maxentius immediately ordered the same indignities to be offered to those of Constantine throughout his dominions.

Still Constantine disguised his resentment, and mildly pleaded the necessity under which he had laboured in his recent actions, wishing to decline a war of such magnitude and danger, that it could only be a contest for life or death.

But Maxentius openly avowed his pretensions to the whole monarchy of the West, and prepared immense forces to invade the Gallic provinces.

Meanwhile a private embassy was sent from Rome to Constantine, complaining piteously of the cruelties of Maxentius, and conjuring him to deliver Rome from a detested tyrant.

He hesitated no longer; and setting all timid counsels utterly at nought, determined to anticipate his rival, and to carry the war into the very heart of Italy.

The expedition which followed was one of the most ably conducted recorded in history. To *resolve* was to *act* with Constantine. His whole forces were but 90,000 foot and 8,000 horse; and it was necessary to leave half these to protect the Rhine from German incursions, unless he sacrificed the public safety to his private quarrel, which it was not in his nature to do. Therefore at the head of only 40,000 soldiers, he marched to encounter an enemy possessing forces four times the number of his own.

But the difference seemed greater than it really was. The hardy troops of Gaul and Britain, accustomed to con-

tinual service against the barbarians, were far more than a match, man to man, for the effeminate soldiers of Maxentius, who had become enfeebled by sloth and luxury, like their master; and the difference was even greater between their leaders.

Crossing the Alps by the route of Mont Cenis, Constantine arrived in Italy, while Maxentius still supposed him on the Rhine. He experienced no difficulties like those which destroyed the forces of the great Hannibal. The military roads of Rome were almost perfect, and those stupendous highways easily admitted of the rapid passage of troops and baggage, for which they were chiefly constructed.

The city of Susa, situated near the southern termination of the mountain pass, shut her gates and attempted resistance; but Constantine carried it by assault, after which he used his utmost exertions to spare the buildings and their inhabitants from destruction. In the plains of Turin a more severe contest awaited him. A large army was drawn up under the lieutenants of Maxentius, and a desperate battle ensued; but the valour of the Britons, Spaniards, and Gauls, and the skill of Constantine, prevailed. The troops of Maxentius fled in utter confusion towards Turin, and as the gates were shut by the inhabitants against them, the slaughter was fearful.

Turin and Milan experienced the clemency of the conqueror; who so diligently sought to protect them from the unavoidable evils of war, that they embraced his cause with zeal.

Constantine had now an open road to Rome before him;



but on his left, near Verona, was a general, distinguished by valour and ability, Pompeianus; and it was necessary first to turn aside and crush this danger. A second great battle took place near Verona. Again the troops of the Italians outnumbered those of Constantine; but valour and skill supplied deficiency in numbers. The battle commenced near the close of day, was continued under the light of the southern moon, and the rising sun saw Pompeianus a corpse, his army slain or flying, and Constantine the victor. Verona surrendered.

There was no longer any enemy in Northern Italy to dread, and Constantine hastened southwards along the Æmilian and Flaminian highways to attack Maxentius in his head-quarters.

The awful crisis now approached, and the eyes of the whole world were concentrated on the impending battle. The Pagans well knew the inclinations of Constantine towards Christianity, and dreaded his success. The Christians well knew that that success would imply the utter cessation of persecution, and his army was crowded by Christian, or would-be Christian, soldiers. Southward he advanced with unexampled rapidity, and still the effeminate Maxentius remained sunk in his debaucheries; and no one dared for a long time to warn him of his extreme danger, until the chief officers who served under his banner yielded to necessity, and disclosed the fates of his two former armies.

Still his resources were great. The Prætorian guards were his, body and soul. He had bought them by indulging all their shameless appetites; and around them, as a

nucleus, a third army was soon collected, outnumbering those which had fought respectively at Turin or Verona. It was not the intention of Maxentius to conduct them in person; but the sneers of the Romans, who made the places of public resort resound with indignant clamours against the cowardice of their tyrant, while they extolled the courage of Constantine, forced him to take the field.

It was during Constantine's march southwards that the stirring incident is said to have occurred, which he communicated, almost with his dying lips, to Eusebius, the historian.

At noonday, while marching at the head of his army, a bright light shone upon him, and looking up with astonishment, he beheld a cross of glittering fire in the heavens with the words over it, "In hoc signo vinces." It was visible to all the army. Thereupon the emperor solemnly vowed to the God of the Christians, Who was also the God of his mother, the Empress Helena, that if victory were granted to his arms, he would protect the Faith and profess himself a convert. During the ensuing night he is said to have had a vision, in which Christ appeared to him and commanded him to make the standard, afterwards known as the *Labarum*, resembling the cross he had seen in the heavens.

This was accordingly made, and given to the bravest of his troops, who were Christians, and the standard long commemorated the appéarance of the portent.

Whatever reliance may be placed on this popular legend, it is evident that Constantine had received some extraordinary impulse, which greatly influenced the whole of his

future life, and which at this critical juncture caused him to throw all his influence on the side of Christianity.

At Saxa Rubra, ten miles from Rome, up the Tiber, Constantine discovered, with a soldier's joy, the enemy drawn up to give him battle, their long front covering a spacious plain, and the Tiber between them, cutting off the hope of retreat.

The army of Maxentius was chiefly composed of Moorish and Numidian cavalry, of legions of newly-levied Italian youth, and of the Prætorian guard itself, numbering nearly forty thousand men, who were determined to live or die with the emperor, whose vices they had shared.

The Gallic and British horse proved more than a match for the lighter African cavalry, and the defeat of the latter left the infantry of Maxentius utterly unprotected on the flanks.

A fearful carnage ensued. The troops of the tyrant yielded on all sides, save the Prætorian guard, who, conscious that they had no claim to mercy, died where they stood, their dead bodies covering the same ground they had occupied whilst yet living.

The routed forces rushed into the river to escape destruction, and, overwhelmed by the weight of their armour, perished in its waters. There was but one solitary bridge, known as the "Milvian Bridge," and it broke beneath the crowd of fugitives. The Emperor Maxentius was forced over its severed planks into the stream, where he was immediately drowned by the weight of his armour, in common with thousands of his followers.

His body, which had sunk into the mud, was found,

with great difficulty, the following day; and the sight of his head, which was severed and exposed to the people, convinced them that they were indeed delivered, and that their tyrant was no more.

So, amidst the rejoicing acclamations of the multitude, Constantine entered Rome in triumph, the acknowledged Emperor of the West.

## CHAPTER XI.

### EARLY CHRISTIAN WORSHIP AND RITUAL.

HAVING now completed our historical survey of the Church of the Martyrs, it becomes necessary to pause awhile in our task, and to cast a cursory glance at the mode and manner of the worship observed by those soldiers of Christ, who conquered through their blood, and won for their successors the peaceful enjoyment of their religion.

By this time the words were literally fulfilled, "Their sound is gone out into all lands, and their words into the ends of the world."

So early as Anacletus, bishop of Rome, about A.D. 104, we have the following passage, indicating the three principal sees of Christendom, from which, as centres, the light of the Gospel was diffused.

"Rome," says Anacletus, "is the *first* Episcopal seat, because S. Peter and S. Paul suffered martyrdom there; Alexandria the *second*, because it was consecrated in the name of S. Peter by his disciple, S. Mark the Evangelist; and Antioch the *third*, because S. Peter, before he came to Rome, dwelt there, and installed Ignatius as its bishop.

From these centres the Gospel spread in all directions.

Justin Martyr, A.D. 168, tells us that "there is not a people, whether Greek or Barbarian, amongst whom prayers are not offered up in the name of the crucified Jesus." Irenæus, about A.D. 190, confirms the testimony, and Tertullian, in a passage already quoted, speaks of the Faith as extending further than the Roman arms, and enumerates Moors, Spaniards, Gauls, Britons, even beyond the Roman pale, Sarmatians, Scythians, and Germans, as subject to Christ, in addition to the nations represented at Jerusalem on the great day of Pentecost.

Later on, we find proof in the writings of Origen, of Christian communities in Arabia and India; in the story of Manes, of Churches in Persia and Mesopotamia; while towards the close of the period of the persecutions, Gregory, called the Illuminator, made a convert of the king, Tiridates, and Armenia had the honour of being the first country which adopted Christianity as its national religion.

Gaul had been widely evangelized before the end of this period by the successors of the martyred Pothinus and Irenæus. Its Christianity thus having an Eastern origin, bore many traces of rites and usages distinct from Western ritual.

Britain had long received the glad tidings. We may perhaps discredit the stories concerning the supposed missions of S. Paul, or S. Joseph of Arimathæa; yet it is evident that traces of Christianity could be discovered at the close of the first century, probably arising from the kindred of Caractacus, who had accompanied him to Rome, and there, as we gather, had been brought under the influence of S. Paul, so that returning after captivity, they brought with them the more sublime freedom of the Gospel.

There is a story about a correspondence between Lucius, a British king, whose territory was situated (probably) in Wales, and Eleutherus, Bishop of Rome, A.D. 167. It is said that the king sent ambassadors to the bishop seeking spiritual aid, that his messengers were ordained, and returning to Britain, laboured successfully in preaching the Faith.

Be this as it may, it is certain that, within thirty years of the supposed correspondence, we find Tertullian, and later Origen, testifying to the progress of Christianity in Britain; and at the close of the last persecution the Church seems to have been fully organized, for we find the Bishops of London, York, and Lincoln, at the Council of Arles, A.D. 314.

Christians are mentioned as having existed in all parts of Spain at the close of the second century, and no less than nineteen Spanish bishops attended the Council of Eliberis, A.D. 305.

In Germany the introduction of Christianity had been less extensive, owing to the barbarism of the inhabitants, who had never yielded to the Roman arms, and in whose territory there were no means of communication, such as existed in the civilized portions of the world.

Still, during this period, there was a bishop at Cologne, and in the last persecution there were martyrs at Augsburg, and in Noricum, where forty soldiers suffered death with grievous tortures.

In Macedonia and Greece the Faith had penetrated far more widely, as also in the islands of the Mediterranean, of which our history has furnished sufficient proof.

In Africa the Faith, now so obscured, was most widely extended. The primate had his see at Carthage, and from thence the Christian doctrines were disseminated throughout Numidia, Mauritania, and Getulia, no less than 270 bishops assembling at the Council of Carthage, which was held A.D. 308.

Thus, by the close of the great persecutions, we find that the living vitality of the Faith of the Crucified, in spite of the cruelty of the state, had penetrated the whole world, as known to the ancients; and, by the time of Constantine, might be considered a power within the state, "*imperium in imperio*."

The constitution of the Church next demands our attention. We have already seen that, in the days of S. John, the Church throughout the world was placed under episcopal control, and that the threefold ministry of bishops, priests, and deacons, was everywhere firmly established; such an organization was not regarded as of the *well-being* merely, but of the *being* of the Church. Thus S. Ignatius, the disciple of the beloved apostle, whose martyrdom we have previously narrated, writing to the Trallians, asserts in the most distinct language, that without these three orders there is no Church, and teaches us generally that the outward frame-work of the Church was fashioned according to the will of her Divine Head.

At first the assembly of Christians in each large town or city had its bishop, and his authority was sometimes limited to that particular congregation; but as the Church increased, presbyters were appointed to exercise delegated



authority in the neighbouring villages or hamlets. These daughter Churches were dependent upon the bishop for such spiritual privileges as were, by necessity or custom, confined to his office, but derived all the ordinary means of grace from their own appointed clergy of the second order. The deacons were, as their name implied, the assistants or ministers of the clergy of the higher orders, assisting in divine service, and taking the general charge of the temporal affairs of the Churches to which they belonged, such as the distribution of alms and the care of property.

The bishops of those Churches which the chief Apostles had founded, became known as Metropolitans, of whom the chief, in the early ages, were those of Rome, Antioch, and Alexandria; but this precedence was simply regarded as one of order. No spiritual powers were assumed by these Metropolitans over their brethren, other than those of jurisdiction; and the conduct of S. Cyprian, upon the occasion of his dispute with S. Stephen of Rome, absolutely proves that the Papal supremacy was unknown as a doctrine, although a primacy was readily conceded to the bishop of the most illustrious Church and of the capital city of the whole world.

There were in addition to these three orders of divine appointment, other minor orders, which were gradually added for the sake of convenience and fitness, sub-deacons, acolytes, exorcists, readers, and door-keepers. The bearers of these designations were admitted to their respective functions by the imposition of hands. The *sub-deacons* took charge of the sacred vessels, and generally assisted

the *deacons*; the *acolytes* lit the lamps and candles employed in divine service, and generally assisted in the arrangement of the sanctuary; the *exorcists* had charge of those who were supposed to be possessed by evil spirits; the *readers* were employed to read the Scriptures in the offices of the Church; and the *ostiarii*, or door-keepers, to superintend the division of the congregation, a more important office then than now, as will be evident from the following particulars respecting the sacred buildings.

We learn from the "Apostolical Constitutions" and other authorities, that the Churches of this early period were commonly in an oblong form, generally turned towards the east, where the sanctuary was placed. They contained three parts—(1), the outer porch, or *narthex*; (2), the inner part, or *nave*; and (3), the *bema*, or sanctuary.

The *narthex*, or porch, was assigned to the unbaptized, or to those under penance; the *nave* to the great body of the Faithful, the women being on the north side, the men on the south; and the sanctuary, wherein the altar stood, was confined in use to the clergy of the three higher grades. Beyond the curtain which separated the *bema* from the *nave*, the floor of the sanctuary was prolonged eastward towards the congregation, and thus formed the place for the clergy in minor orders.

It is not meant that this arrangement could be uniformly observed at a period when the Faithful were frequently driven to worship in dens or caves, or in private houses; but when the relaxation of persecution permitted Christians to honour God with their substance, these prin-

ciples of Church arrangement appear to have been observed. Upon the cessation of the last persecution, most gorgeous Churches were immediately raised, as we learn from the description given by Eusebius of the Church built by Paulinus, Bishop of Tyre.

The central act of worship was, of course, the Holy Eucharist, to which, as Mosheim informs us, the term "Holy Mysteries" was commonly applied as early as the second century. We have already seen Justin Martyr describing the outlines of the rite of administration; but the "*disciplina arcani*," which forbade the Faithful to disclose the details to the uninitiated, has cast much obscurity upon early ritual, although it appears probable that the distinctive features, so universally adopted when persecution ceased, must have been derived from the practice previously existing in the secret celebrations of the Faithful. For these we must refer our readers to our concluding chapter.

There would seem to have been some Apostolic nucleus, from which all the subsequent liturgies of the Church were evolved. This is made evident by a comparison of the differing forms in use in the fourth century, certain marked features being found in each.

The four principal Liturgies existing at the close of this period were those of S. James, S. Mark, S. Peter, and S. John, in use respectively in the Churches of Antioch, Alexandria, Rome, and Ephesus. From the first the present Eastern Liturgies are derived; from the second, the Liturgy of Egypt; from the third, the present Roman missal;

and from the fourth, that of S. John, the Liturgy of the Gallican Church, which was, as we have seen, of Eastern origin, and the mother of the early British Church.

They agree in the following details, which are, however, found in varying order:—

An introductory service, at which the Catechumens, or penitents, were permitted to be present, known as the “*Missa Catechumenorum*.” It corresponded closely to that portion of our own Communion office preceding the Offertory.

The “*Missa Fidelium*,” at which the baptized alone were present, containing the Offertory, or Oblation of the Elements; the Kiss of Peace; the *Sursum Corda*, Preface and *Ter Sanctus*; the words of Institution, followed by the Prayer of Oblation; the Invocation of the Holy Spirit; Intercessions for the living and the departed; the Lord’s Prayer; the Elevation of the Consecrated Elements; the mixture of a fragment of the element of Bread in the chalice; the Communion of the people, and the *Thanksgiving*.

With differences of arrangement, these features are found in each of the four great primitive Liturgies in their earliest form; and it seems natural to conclude that this coincidence arises from their descent from a common and Apostolic origin. The Liturgies of the period under our consideration, namely, of the first three centuries, must certainly, as we may fairly conclude, have possessed these general features, although they became further enriched with ritual and ceremonial when the cessation of persecution gave wealth to the Church.

We have already considered the statements of S. Augustine bearing reference to the hour at which the Holy Communion was celebrated in the primitive ages, as also those of Justin Martyr. The testimony of S. Cyprian is much to the point. He points out, "That the general custom of the Church, to celebrate the Eucharist in the morning only, was not against the rule of Christ; that He offered in the eventide for special reasons, but not such as to bind the Church to the hour; 'we, in the morning, to celebrate the resurrection.'"

A portion of the Blessed Sacrament was reserved for the sick and dying, and called "*Viaticum*," or preparation for the journey from time to eternity. It was also carried by the deacons, or by acolytes, to prisoners to whom access was possible. The memory of a boy named Tarcissus, who died a martyr's death in the tenth persecution, sooner than betray his sacred charge, was long honoured in the Church. Under certain circumstances the Faithful were permitted to carry It home for the sake of daily communion, because in times of danger they could not always assemble together. It appears that under these exceptional circumstances communion in one kind under the species of bread was permitted, although not otherwise allowed. (S. Cyprian de Lapsis, etc.)

The "Agapæ," or Love Feast, continued throughout this period to be observed, but generally in the evening. The rich brought their provisions as to a common meal, and the poor were guests. But as they became, in a later age, the occasion of much scandal, they were prohibited by the Council of Carthage, A.D. 317.

Baptism was accompanied by many significant ceremonies. It was generally administered at Easter, or Whitsuntide, on the eves preceding the great day of the festival. The Catechumens turned to the west, and renounced Satan and his works; to the east, and repeated the Creed. Descending into the Font, they were immersed thrice, in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; emerging, they were clad in white garments, and tapers were put into their hands as the *φωτισμένοι*, or enlightened. Milk and honey were given to them to eat, emblematical of the blessings of the land of promise, to which they had become heirs; and then they were immediately confirmed by the bishop, or by a presbyter deputed to act with Episcopal authority.

The subjects of Baptism were very commonly adults, owing to the numerous conversions effected by the Church at this period; but the children of Christian parents were generally baptized, as now, in their infancy.

We have already considered the testimony of Justin Martyr to this effect. That of Irenæus may well be added. Writing against heresies in a work we have already quoted, he states "that the ordinary means of cleansing from original sin was Baptism, and that children, as well as others, were, therefore, baptized to obtain remission of such sin. Christ," he says, "came to save all persons; all who by Him are regenerated unto God, infants and little ones, children, youths, and older persons." It may be observed that the terms baptism and regeneration are used as synonymous terms by this writer, as by all other authors of this period.

In the Council of Carthage, held in the days of S. Cyprian, the question was discussed whether it was expedient or necessary to baptize infants on the eighth day, following the analogy of circumcision. S. Cyprian, and a council of sixty-six bishops, decided in the negative.

"It is," say they, "our unanimous opinion that the mercy and grace of God is to be denied to none so soon as they are born; for if the greatest offenders receive forgiveness, and no person is kept from baptism and grace, how much less reason is there to prohibit an infant who, newly born, has no other sin, save that he has derived from Adam according to the flesh!"

Yet, as we have already remarked, it was customary, in many Churches, to defer Baptism till the eves of the great festivals, when there was no evident danger of death. Palm Sunday even obtained the name "*Octavæ Infantium*," the Octave of Infants, upon this account.

Immediately after Baptism, if the bishop was present, Confirmation followed—the outward form, comprehending the "Laying on of hands," and the anointing the forehead with oil in the form of the cross, whence Confirmation was frequently called "*The Holy Unction*," or "*The Seal of the Lord*." Tertullian mentions the use of this twofold outward form, adding that the object was the obtaining the "gift of the Holy Spirit" by that benediction.\* Infants were frequently the subjects of Confirmation, and were even made partakers of the Holy Communion afterwards. S. Cyprian and S. Augustine both mention the latter practice, which endured for eight

\* Tertullian de Bapt. cap. vii. and viii.

centuries in the West, and is still in existence in the East.

The penitential discipline of the Early Church, viewed in comparison with modern custom, was exceedingly severe, and the performance of penance a matter of considerable length and difficulty.

The Church divided her penitents into four grades—the *flentes* or weepers, the *audientes* or hearers, the *substrati* or prostrate, and the *consistentes* or co-standers.

This distinction probably arose in the days of S. Cyprian, in consequence of the Novatian Schism. There is no earlier mention of it.

The station of the *flentes* was outside the Church in the porch, where they lay prostrate, imploring the prayers of the Faithful; and here grievous sinners, including many whose sins would now be lightly accounted, remained a whole year. When their perseverance in this humiliating condition had proved their sincerity, they were admitted to the next station.

The *audientes*, or hearers, were allowed to stay through that portion of the "Missa Catechumenorum" concluding with the sermon, within the entrance of the Church. Here they remained a year or many years, according to the nature of their offence.

The *substrati*, or prostrate, were so called because they were allowed to remain after the sermon, and lay prostrate during the prayers which were offered on their behalf, which terminated with the benediction of the bishop or celebrant.

The *consistentes* were those in the last grade of penitence,



who were permitted to be present throughout the "Missa Fidelium," but not to communicate. This the Council of Nicæa calls "*communicating in prayers.*"

Thus S. Basil describes the stations of penitents :—"The first year they are to weep before the gate of the Church, the second year to be admitted to hearing, the third year to lie prostrate (repentance, properly so-called), and the fourth year to stand with the Faithful at prayers, without partaking of the oblation."

Penitents were required to observe all the public fasts of the Church, to abstain from much talking and other innocent diversions or alleviations of life, to pray kneeling on festivals when others stood, and to show their liberality towards the poor, fulfilling other works of mercy, such as the burial of the dead.

Public penance was ordinarily allowed but once, and it was even ordained by various canons that the Communion should be refused, even at their last hour, to those who had relapsed, or who, during their penance, had fallen again into grievous and mortal sin. The ancient canons furnish full proof of this statement, notably those of the Council of Eliberis.

It was not until nearly two centuries had elapsed, in the days of the great S. Leo, that the severity of this discipline was relaxed to any extent. Mosheim thus observes, speaking of those latter days—"A new method of proceeding with regard to penitents was now introduced into the Latin Church; for grievous offenders, who had formerly been obliged to confess their guilt in the face of the congregation, were now delivered from this mortifying

penalty, and obtained from Leo the Great permission to confess their sins privately to a priest appointed for that purpose." Mosheim laments over this change, as though it removed a great barrier against immorality. But may we not rather regard it as dictated by the soundest wisdom under the altered circumstances of the Church? for while ante-baptismal sin might, in the opinion of the ancients, obtain plenary and instant remission in the waters of regeneration, post-baptismal sin could only be remitted by such heavy penance, that multitudes deferred their Baptism, like Constantine the Great, till their dying hour, because they dared not face the contingencies of post-baptismal sin, from which they hardly dared to hope perfect freedom.

After the change, Baptism rapidly assumed its proper place in the system of the Church, and Penance became reduced to the dimensions it was destined to assume through the following ages. Whether its severity was not too greatly relaxed, and absolution too easily attained, will ever be open to question.

The state of Celibacy was, from the time of S. Paul, regarded as a higher state than that of matrimony. The Apostle's statement, "He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord: but he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife (1 Cor. vii. 32, 33), exercised a most powerful influence upon the Early Church; and the celibacy of the clergy was always considered desirable, although not of necessity. Much infor-

mation may be obtained on these subjects from the writings of Tertullian and S. Cyprian concerning "virginity."

The rise and progress of monasticism dates from the third century, although from a yet earlier period the writers of the Alexandrian school had been preparing the minds of Christians to attach a high value to the ascetic and contemplative life, and perhaps contributed equally with the persecutions, which drove thousands of confessors into the deserts, to people those solitudes with hermits and communities of monks.

The first Christian hermit, of whom we have any distinct record, was S. Paul, whose life was written by S. Jerome. He fled, during the Decian persecution, into the deserts of the Thebaid, where for upwards of ninety years he led a life of profound solitude, during which he does not appear to have achieved any other object than his *own* spiritual growth.

But the famous S. Antony, whose biography, written by S. Athanasius, had so large a share in the conversion of S. Augustine, was a man of far higher mark, and has left a name behind him which will never perish.

He was born at Coma, a village in the Thebaid, in the year 251, and before the age of twenty lost both his parents. Shortly afterwards, hearing the Gospel read in Church, he was struck by the words, "Sell that thou hast and give to the poor, and come and follow Me," and he received them as a direct message to him from God.

He sold all his property, and reserving a portion for his only sister, gave all the rest to the poor, and retired to a cave near his native village; but not finding the place

sufficiently solitary, he retired to a tomb, where he was subject to frightful visions and temptations from the Evil One. After the lapse of years he went still further, to the banks of the Red Sea, where he took possession of a ruined castle, in which he dwelt twenty years. During this period he suffered grievous temptations from sensual allurements, and either was, or imagined himself to be, attacked by the Evil One and his emissaries in every frightful variety of form, so that the noise of his conflicts was heard by passers by, whom he never admitted into his dwelling. At the end of that time followers and imitators gathered around him, to whom he imparted all that he knew of the spiritual life. During the persecution under Maximin, he left his desert and administered to the sufferers in every possible way; but although he soothed their last agonies, encouraged them to die, and, in short, put himself foremost in the path of danger, yet he could not gain the object after which he sought, the crown of martyrdom. Retiring again to the desert when the persecution ceased, he sought a yet wilder retreat than before, under the guidance of some Saracens, and found it in a cave in the side of a mountain, where a clear spring supplied him with water, and a few palm trees sheltered him from the heat. Here he cultivated a little corn and vegetables, but ate nothing more. The more he shunned society, the more it sought him; multitudes followed and sought his instructions, and sometimes he left his cell to go and appease some quarrel between brethren; but he always returned, saying, a monk away from his cell was as a fish out of water.

Constantine and his sons sought his advice, but could never entice him to leave his retreat and appear at court. But when the Arians were subverting the faith of many in Alexandria, he left his desert to strengthen and confirm the Catholics, in which his labours were abundantly blessed. Retiring to his monastery—for the neighbourhood was now peopled with his spiritual children—he died in the year 356, aged 105, a few days only before the great Athanasius, his biographer, fleeing from persecution, found refuge amongst his monks, as we shall hereafter relate.

The example set by Antony found numerous followers; and the "cœnobitic," or social system, upon which pattern the later monasteries were founded, became exceedingly prevalent.

Pachomius, like Antony, a native of the Thebaid, directed by a heavenly vision, founded a monastery in an island of the river Nile, called Tabenne, which before his death numbered 1400 inmates, and had become the pattern for seven similar societies following his rule.

Absolute obedience to the abbot; the community of goods; labour for the support of the monastery and the poor; continual private prayer; frequent services; fasting twice in the week; a peculiar dress, which they were never to change or to remove, even when they slept;—such were the fundamental rules of the community.

A sister of Pachomius came to visit him, but not being allowed to see her brother, founded a convent at a short distance for female recluses, who first took the name "nuns." Before the close of a century, the brethren following the rule of Pachomius numbered 50,000.

The famous monasteries of Nitria, renowned in the history of the Alexandrian Church, were founded by one Ammon, who took up his abode on the Nitrian mountain; and those of Scetis by the elder Macarius, so called to distinguish him from a celebrated contemporary.

Perpetual silence was their rule, save in the public worship of God. Large numbers of cells, grouped together, were called a *Laura*, and their inhabitants *Cœnobites*; but many of the brethren dwelt apart as *Solitaries*. We shall behold the development of this system in the course of our history.

We have already learned, from the account given us by the Church of Smyrna of the martyrdom of S. Polycarp, that so early as the second century it was customary to observe the anniversary of the triumph of a martyr, or, as we should now say, "the Saints' Days."

The Holy Eucharist was commonly offered upon his tomb as an act of thanksgiving, and the acts of his passion were read. Thus the Faithful were stirred up both to veneration and imitation.

The first day of the week was known from Apostolic times as the "*Dies Dominica*," or Lord's-day, and carefully distinguished from the Sabbath, which was still separately observed in some parts of the Church. The celebration of the Holy Eucharist formed an essential part of the observance of the day, which was thence frequently called the "*Day of Bread*."

It was a day of rest and gladness, and so all servile labour was interdicted where it was possible, which it

could not have been in the case of slaves under heathen masters in the days of persecution; but when Constantine ascended the throne, he at once legalized the observance of the day throughout the empire.

All fasting was prohibited on this day, even in the solemn season of Lent, as we learn from Tertullian, who says, "We count it a crime to fast on the Lord's-day;" and all prayers were offered in a standing posture, in memory of the Lord's Resurrection.

The solemn observance of Christmas-day, the Holy Week, Easter, Ascension-day, and Pentecost, may be traced to these earlier ages, although, in the East, Christmas-day was confounded with the Epiphany, while in the West it was observed, as we now observe it, on the twenty-fifth of December.

The Paschal solemnity usually included the whole week before, as well as the week after Easter Sunday, although the observance of the Passion by the Quarto-decimans on the fourteenth of the moon, in the Jewish month Nisan, upon whatsoever day that might happen to fall, caused great diversity of practice, which was obviated at Nicæa by the adoption of the rule that Easter-day should always be kept on the Sunday after that full moon, a rule which still prevails.

The whole space from Easter to Whitsuntide, as Tertullian informs us, was one continued festival, during which time the Church particularly exercised herself in meditation upon the Acts of the Holy Apostles, as recording the results of the Lord's Resurrection.

All fasting and kneeling were prohibited during this

solemn season, as on the Lord's-day itself. S. Augustine particularly mentions the celebration of Ascension-day, during this period, as of Apostolical institution. The vigils before these great festivals, as also before the days of martyrs, were usually observed by psalmody, hymns, and prayers all through the night.

The Lenten fast is mentioned by Tertullian; but its length is very doubtful. It is only certain that it was observed with great severity during the forty hours preceding the Resurrection, as early as the second century. The mode of fasting appears to have been a rigorous abstinence from all food until the evening; while the abundance of which Christians thus deprived themselves was, as Origen remarks, bestowed upon the poor. There were religious assemblies and sermons each day in Lent, and the celebration of all festivals, birthdays, and marriages was prohibited.

Wednesdays and Fridays were observed as days of fasting, and called "stationary days," the one in memory of the *Betrayal*, the other of the *Passion*; but the fast terminated at the ninth hour. Origen again bears testimony to this observance. Many Churches added Saturday also to the list of fasting days, as the Jewish Sabbath.



## CHAPTER XII.

### FROM THE ACCESSION OF CONSTANTINE TO THE COUNCIL OF NICÆA.

A.D. 312-325.

WE have now arrived at an important epoch in the history of the Church, and have to consider her as emerging from the darkness of the catacombs to the light of day, no longer proscribed and persecuted, but the religion of the rulers of the world.

Paganism had received its death blow; that mighty system, identified with all the past glories of the Roman state, was now deprived of the Imperial support which had been the sole secret of its strength. It still lingered on indeed, but in a moribund condition, perishing by slow but sure decay.

But although the battle of the Milvian Bridge sealed its fate, it must not be supposed that the triumph of Christianity was immediate, or that the adherents of Paganism had as yet fully comprehended the blow which they had received.

Constantine was not yet even a catechumen. It was a very arduous task to eradicate the habits and prejudices of his early years, and he only disclosed his new opinions

publicly, so far as he was in a condition to act upon them with effect.

Thus during the whole course of his reign Christianity was ever advancing, but with the gentleness of the rising tide, not with the rush of an avalanche; so that its enemies were long before they realized how real was its progress.

Up to this time Apollo had been the tutelary deity of Constantine, and the altars of the Sun god were rich with his offerings. Thus the Pagans ascribed his rapid career of victory and success to the protection and favour of that deity. Yet from the moment of his accession to power in Britain he had uniformly favoured the Christians, having, as he himself stated, indignantly beheld the cruelties inflicted by Galerius upon citizens whose only crime was their religion.

Following the authority and advice of a dying father, he had suspended from the first the persecuting edicts in the region under his dominion; and the Christians flocked to his legions in great numbers, assured of his protection. And now he was master of Rome.

Persecution ceased from the moment of his victory; and five months after the celebrated *Edict of Milan* was issued, which conferred lasting peace upon the Church. Constantine had already met Licinius, the sovereign of the East, and, with his concurrence, had proclaimed full liberty to the Christians, and to all others, of exercising the religion which they deemed best adapted to their use, exacting from the governors of the provinces a strict obedience to the true and simple meaning of the Edict, which was

designed to secure, without limitation or exception, full liberty of conscience.

It was also enacted that the Churches and lands which had been confiscated, or unjustly taken from the Christians, should be restored to the Church without dispute or delay, and without expense. Any loss which might thereby accrue to the actual possessors was to be reimbursed from the Imperial Treasury.

Meanwhile another enemy of the Church, and ally of Maxentius, met his doom.

When Galerius in his last illness proclaimed toleration to the afflicted Church, he had associated the names of Constantine and Licinius with his own, being well assured of their concurrence. But he did not venture to insert in the preamble the name of Maximin, whose consent was of the greatest importance, and who succeeded shortly afterwards to the provinces of Asia. For six months, however, Maximin affected to follow the prudent counsels of his predecessor and benefactor, and directed the public officers to connive at the secret assemblies of the Christians.

In consequence great numbers were delivered from exile and prison, and the Church thanked God and took courage. But the calm was of short duration. Cruelty and superstition were the ruling features of the character of Maximin, and after a short period he yielded to the entreaties of the heathen priests, and, in spite of the examples of his colleagues, renewed the worst features of the late persecution throughout his dominions.

He had but a short time. Impelled towards his fate, he assumed the character of the avenger of Maxentius, and

in the depth of winter left Syria with his army to fall upon Licinius as the ally of Constantine. The season was a severe one; great numbers of his army perished in the snow; yet he arrived with the remnant on the borders of the Bosphorus, before the news had reached the lieutenants of Licinius that he had left Syria.

Byzantium succumbed to its fate, when Maximin received intelligence that Licinius awaited him at a distance of eighteen miles.

After a fruitless negotiation, the two princes had recourse to arms. Maximin possessed seventy thousand followers, Licinius only thirty thousand; but the hand of Divine vengeance was against the perfidious persecutor. He was utterly defeated, and fled with such desperate haste that within a day he reached Nicomedia, one hundred and sixty miles from the scene of action, pale, trembling, and destitute of the ensigns of his dignity. He might still have protracted the struggle; but he had lost all his courage and prudence. He retreated to Tarsus; repealed the edicts against the Christians, which he now recognized as the cause of the Divine wrath; slew his Pagan divines, who had assured him of the favour of their gods; and ended the lamentable scene by taking poison. In the lingering agony which followed, he lost his sight, and though blind to all around him, nevertheless his imagination peopled the void. "Do you not see," he cried to his attendants, "God is there, robed in white, giving sentence against me." He dashed his head against the wall, and, in alternations of dark despair and piteous appeals to the Divine mercy, breathed his last. His innocent children, a boy of eight

and a girl of seven, were put to death by the ruthless Licinius.

Meanwhile Constantine was rapidly manifesting the favour with which he regarded the Christians. His self-interest doubtless struggled long with his conviction of the truth; but he must greatly have conquered the prejudices of the army and of his people before he could erect in the midst of Rome a statue of himself, bearing the cross in his right hand, with an inscription referring the victory of his arms, and the deliverance of Rome, to that saving sign.

But the principal standard which described the triumph of the cross was the *Labarum*, which we have previously mentioned, a standard in the form of a cross, with a silken veil hanging from the transverse beam, surmounted by a crown of gold, inclosing the sacred monogram. This standard was committed to the care of fifty chosen warriors, and some fortunate accidents (as Gibbon calls them) soon introduced an opinion that its guards were invulnerable in the execution of their office. In the second war against Licinius, which we have to relate, the sight of this banner animated the soldiers of Constantine with invincible courage, and scattered terror and dismay through the opposing legions, which the Pagans attributed to magic, but the Christians to the Divine aid.

There is still extant a medal of Constantine, whereon the *Labarum* is depicted, with these words, "In hoc signo vinces," as a legend.

It is difficult in these days to comprehend the total change of feeling which was involved in these circum-

stances. The Cross, as the instrument of the tortures inflicted only upon slaves and strangers, was an object of detestation to a Roman citizen, so closely was it associated with the thought of ignominy and pain. For instance, Cicero writes: "Let the very name of the Cross be absent, not merely from the body of a Roman citizen, but even from the thoughts, the eyes, and the ears."

Yet on all occasions of danger, distress, or temptation, it was the practice of the Primitive Christians to fortify both mind and body by the sign, which they seemed almost to regard as an infallible preservative against spiritual evil. And now, by the abolition of the punishment, the ignominy of the Cross passed away, and it became the chosen sign under which the legions of the empire marched to victory.

A further act of Constantine protected the Christians against the animosity of the Jews, hitherto their most relentless adversaries, while he attempted to restrain the scandalous impurity habitual to Pagans by laws of so severe a character, that their execution became almost impossible. In A.D. 319 he forbade private sacrifices and divination, making their celebration a capital offence, although their public exercise was still permitted. In 321 an edict was issued which commanded the public observance of the Sunday, which appears to have been gladly accepted by all—by the Christians for obvious reasons, by the Pagans as merely an exercise of the Pontifical authority possessed by the Emperor according to the Pagan system. Holidays were doubtless as acceptable then as now. As sovereign, Constantine was still "*Pontifex Maximus*," and

we must carefully distinguish between his official and his personal acts. Even yet he was unbaptized, and only a protector, not a member of the Catholic Church.

Agricultural labours might still be carried on during the Sunday, but all traffic in towns was to be suspended; and even the heathen soldiers were required to repeat a prayer to the "Supreme Deity." Sozomen adds that the enactment was extended to the Friday. By an edict the same year, the old laws against unmarried citizens were repealed in favour of the growing Christian sentiment for celibacy.

But a crisis was approaching in the history of Constantine, the last and decisive struggle with Licinius.

In his heart Licinius hated Christianity, and, undeterred by the fate of his predecessors, commenced a counter legislation in the East in favour of Paganism. His dominions embraced all the Roman provinces in Asia, Europe being under the rule of Constantine, with the exception of Thrace.

*First*, he forbade the clergy to hold synods; *secondly*, to hold Church services in cities; *thirdly*, he dismissed his Christian officers, and ordered his soldiers to sacrifice to the gods.

At Sebaste forty Christian soldiers refused. It was a bitterly cold night, and they were stripped and exposed on a frozen lake to the severity of an Armenian winter, while hot baths and warm shelter were provided on the well-guarded shore for those who consented to apostatize. One after another they sank down and died, while the survivors continued to pray—"As forty have entered the

lists, so may forty gain the crown." The prayer was heard. One indeed gave way; but his place was immediately filled by one of the guards, who professed himself a Christian, and died like the others.

One of the most eloquent orations of S. Basil commemorates their suffering and their victory.

Bishops were, as before, the objects of the greatest hatred. One was cut in pieces, another had his hands mutilated with hot iron, so as to disable him from performing the sacred rites.

The military administration of Constantine had been glorious. He had taught the Goths and their kindred barbarians to dread the very name of Rome, and forced them to supply the flower of their youth to fill the Roman legions. And now circumstances made it evident that there was but room for *one* Roman emperor, and that the rival religions (if Paganism could be called a religion) must contend once more for the supremacy—nay, the right to exist—in the persons of their respective protectors, Constantine and Licinius.

The battle which decided the fate of the war was fought at Adrianople, in September, A.D. 323, on the banks of the Hebrus; and it ended in the complete defeat of Licinius, who took refuge in Byzantium. Another battle was fought near Scutari with similar results; and Licinius surrendered his person to Constantine, was admitted the same day to the imperial banquet, and sent into honourable captivity at Thessalonica. Here he was accused of conspiracy, and of treasonable correspondence with the barbarians, so his confinement was terminated by death.



By this victory of Constantine the Roman world was again united under one emperor, thirty-seven years after its division under Diocletian and Maximian. The immediate consequences of this revolution were, the final establishment of Christianity as the national religion, and the foundation of Constantinople. Constantine had learned from the disturbances excited by the heathen priesthood in favour of Licinius, that neither the empire nor himself could expect any tranquillity or safety while the ancient superstitions existed; and from this period Pagan emblems disappeared from Roman coins and medals, while the emperor openly opposed the rites of heathen worship as detrimental to the state.

The Church had fought the battle against Pagan intolerance, and the powers of evil had failed in the attempt to crush her by persecution.

But, foiled in this attempt, they had recourse to yet more deadly weapons, less abhorrent indeed to flesh and blood, but far more likely to command success. The Faith for which the martyrs died was assaulted by the introduction of schism and deadly heresy—the schism of the Donatists, the heresy of the Arians.

Mensurius, Bishop of Carthage, dying in the year 311, the majority of the clergy, and also of the laity, chose the Archdeacon Cæcilianus to be his successor, and consecrated him without waiting for the consent of the Numidian bishops, who had always hitherto been consulted. The Numidians were greatly offended, and led by Donatus, Bishop of Casæ Nigræ, deposed Cæcilianus, upon

the ground that he had been consecrated by a "Traditor," Felix of Aptunga, and that he had cruelly withheld relief from those who had voluntarily courted martyrdom during the late persecution. Therefore they proceeded to consecrate Majorinus, his deacon, Bishop of Carthage.

The Carthaginian Church was utterly distracted between the two factions, and the unhappy controversy spread so rapidly that all the provinces of Africa took part in the strife, and in every important city there were shortly two bishops to be found, differing only by their allegiance to Cæcilianus or Majorinus.

When the edict of Milan extended toleration to the Church, and recognized Christians as a body known to the law, a separate ordinance, addressed to the Proconsul of Africa, interpreted that designation to mean the "Catholic Church," in opposition to the Donatist schism.

Whereupon the Donatists appealed to the emperor, who referred the case to Melchiades, Bishop of Rome, and three Gallic bishops. The result was, that Cæcilianus was fully acquitted of the crime laid to his charge, and the evidence that Felix had been a Traditor was pronounced a wretched forgery. The Donatists thereupon appealed to a council, and Constantine summoned a large assembly of bishops to meet at Arles in the year 314. Nearly four hundred bishops assembled, including the Bishops of London, Lincoln, and York. The cause of Cæcilianus was still triumphant; but with an earnest desire for peace and unity, the council simply deposed Majorinus, and decreed that in every see save Carthage the bishop, senior by consecration, whether he had followed Cæcilianus or Majorinus, should retain the see.

But far from accepting this compromise, offered in genuine Christian love, the Donatists "appealed unto Cæsar" in the person of Constantine.

The emperor rightly characterized their appeal as treason to the Church and its Lord. Still, he confronted Cæcilianus with his accusers, and confirmed the decisions of the council.

Thereupon the Donatists loaded him with the bitterest reproaches, and the basest insinuations against his honour and justice; so that, moved by a righteous indignation, he deprived them of their churches in Africa, and banished their bishops, whereupon violent commotions arose.

These unhappy scenes gave rise to a horrible confederacy of desperate ruffians, known as the *circumcellions*. This furious and bloody set of men, composed of the savage populace who embraced the party of the Donatists, maintained their cause by force of arms, and overrunning all Africa, filled that unhappy province with slaughter and rapine, until, to prevent a civil war, Constantine, having in vain tried every other mode of accommodation, was persuaded by the governors of Africa to repeal the laws against the Donatists, and proclaim full toleration. This outrageous multitude, however, disdained to live in peace with the Catholics, whom they had treated with the most ferocious cruelty; and utterly careless of death, which they regarded simply as martyrdom, became themselves the most ruthless of persecutors, making it dangerous for the Catholics to dwell elsewhere than within the shelter of their cities. The bands of circumcellions, whose war-cry was more dreaded than the roaring of lions, roamed from

village to village, and house to house, armed with huge clubs, which they called *Israels*, wherewith they mercilessly assaulted those who refused to support their cause by involuntary contributions. Their pride and insolence knew no bounds. Excluded, by their own act, from the civil and religious communion of mankind, they boldly excommunicated the Catholic Church, asserting that all the bishops of Europe and Asia were infected with the guilt of schism; that the Church was now confined to the faithful in Africa, who had alone preserved the integrity of their faith and discipline. This uncharitable theory was supported by unequivocal practice. They re-baptized the laymen and re-ordained the priests who became proselytes to their schism, while bishops, virgins, and even infants, had to submit to the disgrace of public penance before they could be purified from the guilt of Catholic communion. If they obtained possession of the sacred buildings which the Catholics had occupied, they washed the pavements, scraped the walls, burnt the altar if of wood, melted the sacred vessels, and even cast the reserved Sacrament to dogs. Yet they still retained all the externals of Catholic faith and worship, and a stranger could not have distinguished any variation between the rites of the rival bodies in Africa. Under the second Donatus, who succeeded Majorinus, they gained great power, and, as we shall see, distracted the African Church for generations.

But this schism was confined to Africa, and has left no fruits of bitterness to the Church of later days. On the other hand, *Arianism* penetrated the whole Christian

world, and has been the prolific parent of modern heresy. From the age of Constantine to the fall of the empire its struggles deeply affected the welfare both of Roman and Barbarian. Hence it merits our close attention.

Arius, the great heresiarch, was a Libyan by birth, who joined the schism, known as the Meletian schism, which was originated in the African Church by Meletius, Bishop of Lycopolis, in Egypt. Repenting of his weakness, he was absolved from the guilt of rebellion by Peter, Bishop of Alexandria, subsequently a martyr, and was ordained deacon, but relapsing, was again excommunicated. Once more abjuring his schismatic propensities, he was ordained priest by Achillas, the successor of Peter, and under Alexander, the successor of Achillas, acted as one of the chief parochial clergy of Alexandria.

In the year 319, Alexander preached a sermon upon the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, in which he stated the Faith with great clearness of speech, to the great scandal of Arius, who accused his bishop of tritheism (or the worship of three gods), and published an indignant protest, arguing that the Father *must* have existed before the Son; that the Son was not, therefore, eternal; that, like all other creatures, He was made of a substance not previously existing, and was *not*, therefore, of one substance with the Father.

The great fallacy of his argument lay, of course, in his arguing from human things to divine, as if they were necessarily parallel, and its charm to the multitude lay in the ease with which such a system could be comprehended, in contrast to the mystery of the Catholic doctrine, which was far beyond the grasp of human comprehension.

The manners of Arius were very attractive. His moral character, apart from his pride and self-sufficiency was irreproachable. A tall, elderly man, with worn, pallid features, and downcast eyes, the quiet dignity of his bearing, his musical and persuasive voice, his fluent eloquence, had an irresistible charm for the giddy multitude of Alexandria. His party grew daily in numbers. The streets re-echoed with disputations on the most sacred mysteries, which were in great danger of being thereby brought into contempt. It is said that if one asked a baker for bread, he would reply, before serving his customer, "Great is the Only Begotten," to which his customer might answer, if an Arian, "Greater is He that begat Him," thereby losing all chance of receiving the bread he came to buy. The public baths echoed with their noisy and irreverent disputations. Alexandria had been the great seat of the later Grecian philosophy, and philosophical disputations had great charms for its excitable populace.

Alexander summoned a council of one hundred bishops, before whom Arius made his appearance. The council question proposed to him was this, "Could the Son of God have changed from good to evil?" Arius unhesitatingly replied, "Yes, He could;" and the council pronounced a solemn anathema against him and his adherents. What else, indeed, could they do? The very existence of traditional Christianity was at stake, the whole question of the Incarnation.

Expelled from Alexandria, Arius visited Palestine, where he was received with open arms by his old schoolfellow, Eusebius, of Nicomedia, finding partial support also from

Eusebius, the historian, Bishop of Cæsarea, while the Bishops of Bithynia pronounced him worthy of communion.

Alexander issued an encyclical letter, in which he gave a full account of the rise and progress of the heresy, while Arius replied by embodying his opinions in a set of verses called the "Thalia," in which he described the Son as a creature of the Father's will, not *one* in essence with Him, but only capable of knowing Him in part, the *first*, indeed, of creatures, but that was all. These verses were bandied about as popular songs of the present day might be, and the very boys and women were assailed in the markets with flippant jests upon "an Eternal Son."

At this point Constantine wrote to the disputants, utterly misapprehending the point in question. He assured them their differences were but trivial, and besought them to be reconciled; but matters grew worse and worse. The Emperor perceived that he had utterly mistaken the importance of the question; and the inefficacy of provincial councils or synods to settle the dispute, suggested to him the idea of a general council representing the whole of Christendom.

It is not to be supposed that in this matter Constantine acted upon his own private judgment, but rather upon the counsels of his spiritual advisers: although not yet admitted by Baptism to the number of the Faithful, he had assumed the office of Protector of the Church, and as such he now used the resources of the imperial power to summon her bishops, metropolitans, and rulers from the ends of the earth, defraying their expenses from the treasury.

Before this period, as we have frequently seen, the government of the Church had been in the hands of the bishops, with the assistance of local synods, composed of their presbytery, who formed the council. The same principle was observed in the government of provinces, where the metropolitan assembled his suffragans, and affairs of importance were submitted to their collective wisdom. A legitimate development of this principle was the gathering together of the metropolitans of the whole Church, with such of their suffragans as could attend, to decide upon matters of doctrine and practice, involving the welfare of Christendom in general.

This had never been practicable, for obvious reasons, during the age of persecutions; but, under the authority of Constantine, the *first general council* was now summoned to meet at Nicæa, the chief city of Bithynia, in Asia Minor.

It will be at once seen that Constantine only assumed authority over the external affairs of the Church, where they necessarily came into contact with the secular authority. In his view, as Mosheim observes, the administration of the Church was divided into the external and internal inspection. The latter, which was committed to bishops and councils, related to religious controversies, the forms of divine worship, the offices of the priests, the correction of vices and scandals amongst the clergy, etc. etc. The *external* administration comprehended all things that related to the outward condition, and discipline of the Church in its relation to the state; to all controversies concerning the temporal possessions, the revenues, the rights



and privileges of the sacerdotal order, the limits of ecclesiastical provinces, and civil causes between the ministers of the Church.

Naturally there was occasionally some confusion in this division, and the limits were occasionally overstepped on either side, as we shall frequently perceive in the history of the sons of Constantine and their successors.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### FROM THE COUNCIL OF NICÆA TO THE DEATH OF CONSTANTINE.

A.D. 325-327.

THE first Ecumenical Council met at Nicæa, situated near the imperial palace at Nicomedia, on the nineteenth of June, A.D. 325. Three hundred and eighteen bishops represented the whole of Christendom. Sylvester, the aged Bishop of Rome, was unable to encounter the fatigues of the journey, and was represented by two of his priests. Hosius, Bishop of Cordova, in Spain, the bosom friend of the emperor, is said to have presided. Alexander was, of course, present, and was attended by his deacon, the great Athanasius, who then first became known to fame.

Until the arrival of the emperor, the council held its sessions in the cathedral; after his arrival, in the imperial palace. Constantine attended, clad in gold and purple, but without the pomp of guards, and took his seat modestly as one who came to hear, not to judge.

Before this imposing assembly thus met, in reliance upon His promise, Who had said that the Holy Spirit

should guide His Church into all truth, Arius was personally examined.

He plainly stated, in the course of his replies, (1) that the Son of God was a creature; (2) that there was a time when HE did not exist; (3) that HE was created out of nothing; (4) that HE might have sinned against God.

The assembly cried out and stopped their ears. Still it was wisely decided that the question should not be settled by mere protest, but solemnly discussed. Accordingly Athanasius and others exhibited their argumentative powers on behalf of the truth. The Arians and Eusebians contrived to affix a heretical meaning to every scriptural phrase, even evading such texts as "I and My Father are One," or the expression, "He is very God," by these equivocal explanations.

Only *one* word could not be evaded, and it was made the test of orthodoxy. It was the "Homocousion" expressing the words in our English creed, "Being of *one substance* with the Father." The Arians could not evade this; and a document written by Eusebius, of Nicomedia, pronouncing it inadmissible, was torn up by the council.

Then the Nicene Creed, containing this *word*, was drawn up as far as the words, "Whose kingdom shall have no end."

Seventeen Arian bishops refused to sign it; but all yielded under imperial pressure excepting *five*; for the emperor menaced them with civil penalties. Three of these, including Eusebius, at length gave way, and Arius had but two episcopal supporters left, who were banished with him, and with two of his personal friends, to Illyria.

Acesius, the Novatian bishop, was present, by the desire of Constantine, at the council. The origin of this sect in the days of Cyprian has already been related. When the council was over, Constantine asked Acesius why he would not return to Catholic unity. He replied that he could not swerve from the rule which denied absolution to those who fell into mortal sin after baptism. "Then take a ladder," said Constantine, "and go to heaven alone."

It appears from authentic records, that in addition to the condemnation of Arius, other important points were determined in the course of the council. (1.) The Paschal controversy was terminated in favour of the practice generally existing in the West, and all Churches were ordered to keep Easter in future upon the Sunday following the fourteenth day of the first moon after the vernal equinox; a rule still regulating that important festival. (2.) The troubles Novatian had excited by opposing the restoration of the lapsed to the communion of the Church were appeased. (3.) The Meletian schism, caused originally by the deposition of Meletius of Lycopolis, by Peter of Alexandria, was happily terminated, Meletius being admitted to communion, and allowed to retain the title without the powers of a bishop, while his clergy were allowed to exercise their functions after the canonical defects in their ordination had been supplied.

The decrees of the council were now despatched to all parts of Christendom, and were received with universal joy. Men supposed that the painful struggle was over. The cause of truth had triumphed, and Gregory of Armenia but expressed the general feeling when, receiving the

Nicene Creed, he exclaimed, "Yea, verily, we glorify Him Who was before all worlds, adoring the Holy Trinity and the One Divinity of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, now and for ever. Amen."

Thus the first great battle which the Church had to wage for the doctrine of the Incarnation was won; and when we consider the importance of the doctrine at stake, we shall not wonder that men thanked God so earnestly for Nicæa.

For some time after the council Constantine steadily pursued the course he had inaugurated at Nicæa, caring, perhaps, a *little* for truth, and much more for peace. He banished Eusebius of Nicomedia, and another bishop, for communicating with the heretics; and even condescended to write a personal letter to Arius, in which he ridiculed both his person and his doctrines.

About the year 326 his mother, the pious Helena, made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, to satisfy the instinct of piety, by visiting the scenes of the earthly life and sufferings of the Saviour. The jealousy of the Pagans had raised a huge mound of earth over the site of the Holy Sepulchre, and had erected a temple to Venus upon the summit.

This temple Helena caused to be destroyed, and the mound to be removed, when the Holy Sepulchre was again brought to light; and, according to a tradition, supported by the venerable authority of S. Cyril, S. Jerome, S. Chrysostom, and S. Ambrose, the three crosses of Calvary were also discovered, the holy wood upon which the Saviour had expiated the sins of the world being distinguished, according to the two latter Fathers, by its title. This

event is commemorated in our Calendar on the third of May.

A gorgeous Church arose around the Holy Sepulchre at the imperial cost, while other Churches were founded in the city in honour of the Crucifixion; at Bethlehem, in honour of the Nativity; and in the Mount of Olives, in honour of the Ascension. Another was founded by the imperial order at Mamre, where the mysterious Three had appeared to Abraham; while the Church-building in Judæa was completely eclipsed by the activity with which similar operations were carried on in Rome, where basilicas, or law courts, had been converted into magnificent Churches; and the first Church of S. Peter arose on the Vatican hill in the place of a Temple of Apollo: it was richly endowed with estates, and gorgeously adorned.

But meanwhile a Christian city, destined to become the chief seat of the empire, had arisen—*New Rome, or Constantinople.*

No trace of idolatry was to be found in this purely Christian city. It was solemnly dedicated to the God of Martyrs in the May of 330. The chief ornament of the imperial palace was a cross in gold and gems, while the fountains in the forum were surmounted by the statue of the Good Shepherd. Its principal Church was dedicated to the Divine Wisdom (S. Sophia). It has, alas! since become a Mahomedan mosque, and the city, so purely Christian in its design, is the stronghold of the faith of the false prophet.

The Roman citizens must have felt very much aggrieved by a change which finally deprived Rome of its exclusive

dignity; yet even *they* must have owned that Constantinople was a fitter residence for a prince, whose presence was constantly required on the Euphrates or on the Danube.

As might have been expected, the conversion of the emperor gave a great impulse to the spread of Christianity. Everywhere multitudes hastened to be enrolled as catechumens. Images and temples were destroyed, and Churches erected. Two noted temples, that of *Æsculapius* in *Ægis*, and that of *Venus* near Mount Lebanon, were uprooted from their very foundations by the pious zeal of the inhabitants. Whole cities, in some instances, embraced Christianity with common consent; as, for instance, a port of Gaza, called *Magima*, to which, in recognition of its zeal, the emperor gave the name *Constantina*, with more substantial tokens of his favour. So that there may be some fear that the progress of the Faith was assisted by the prospect of earthly as well as eternal rewards.

When the emperor travelled, or while he was upon his campaigns, a movable tent, furnished with all the necessary accessories of Divine service, and attendant ministers, accompanied him; and conversions in the army were of daily occurrence on such occasions.

The influence of the emperor was felt even amongst the savage barbarians of the frontier. The tribes on both sides of the Rhine embraced Christianity; the Britons and Gauls rapidly renounced Pagan superstition, encouraged by the example of their favourite leader, who had issued from their territory to conquer the empire of the world. The Iberians, a large and warlike nation beyond Armenia,

were converted through the instrumentality of a captive maiden ; and their sovereign, in consequence of the miraculous dispersion of a mist, in which he was encircled, made open profession of the Faith of Christ.

But a painful event, which happened shortly afterwards, embittered the declining years of Constantine, and gave occasion for many bitter remarks on the part of his subjects. The emperor had been twice married. Minervina, his first wife, the obscure but lawful object of his youthful attachment, dying, left one son, Crispus, adorned, if we may believe the historians, with every virtue which should have endeared him to his father's heart. The second wife of Constantine was Fausta, the daughter of Maximian, and she proved a cruel step-mother to the unfortunate Crispus, whom she doubtless regarded as the rival of her own children, Constantine, Constantius, and Constans.

The care of the education of Crispus was entrusted to Lactantius, the most eloquent of the Christian orators, a preceptor admirably qualified to form the character and to excite the virtues of his pupil. At the age of seventeen, Crispus was invested with the title of Caesar, and the administration of the Gallic provinces, where he displayed great valour in repelling German invasions. In the civil war against Licinius, he contributed greatly to the success of his father's arms, and the names of Constantine and Crispus were associated in the joyful acclamations which greeted the victors. But the arts of his step-mother working upon the stern jealousy, which was the weak point in the character of Constantine, led the emperor to suspect that his son was plotting against his throne and



his life, and miserable spies and informers reported and distorted every indiscreet action of the young prince, who was already pained by his father's cold and suspicious behaviour. When the twentieth anniversary of the accession of Constantine took place, the emperor removed his court from Nicomedia to Rome, where every preparation had been made to celebrate the festival.

In the midst of the rejoicings, the unfortunate Crispus was arrested by order of his father. The examination was short and private. He was sent under a strong guard to Pola, in Istria, where soon afterwards he was put to death, either by the hand of the executioner, or by the more gentle operation of poison. The Cæsar Licinius, a youth of amiable manners, was involved in his ruin, and the cruel jealousy of Constantine was unmoved by the prayers and tears of his favourite sister, the widow of the elder Licinius, and the mother of the unhappy youth, pleading for the life of her son, whose rank was his only crime, and whose loss she did not long survive.

The whole story of these unhappy princes is buried in deep obscurity, with such secrecy were the trials conducted. Eusebius, in his life of the emperor, does not even mention the subject.

Some historians assure us that the remorse of the emperor, when he afterwards discovered the false foundations upon which the charges rested, knew no bounds, that for forty days he abstained from all the comforts of life, and erected a golden statue to Crispus, with the inscription—"To my son, whom I unjustly condemned." Others assert that he atoned for the judicial murder of his innocent son

by the execution of the guilty step-mother, his wife; but even this rests only upon slender evidence. The future lives of the sons of Fausta caused the world to lament Crispus.

Before these events the venerable Alexander, Bishop of Alexandria, had departed this life, and within a few months, Athanasius, in spite of his real reluctance to accept the dignity, was elected his successor by a majority of the bishops of the province, notwithstanding the hatred of those who sympathized with Arius. This took place in the end of A.D. 326, in the thirtieth year of his age.

Within two years the Arian troubles revived through the influence of Constantia, the sister of the emperor, and widow of Licinius, who had been greatly under the influence of Eusebius of Nicomedia, by whom she was easily persuaded that Arius had been unjustly condemned.

On her death-bed she impressed the same belief on her brother, and, when she was no more, he summoned Arius, and his friend, the deacon Euzoius, to court. They were too wise to profess their errors in the same unqualified terms as before; but composed a creed in scriptural language, which, although defective, was not heretical, so that Constantine, whose theology was very imperfect, became satisfied of their orthodoxy. Eusebius and Theognis were also recalled from exile; and not content with toleration, tried at once to imperil the security of Athanasius and the Catholics.

They made the most false and unscrupulous charges against Eustathius, Bishop of Antioch, whom they accused of grievous crimes. The people of Antioch, in their in-

dignation, threatened a tumult, and Constantine sent the bishop into exile, replacing him by an Arian.

But Athanasius was the great object of their hatred, and in order to remove him from his see, they condescended to such base measures as sufficiently prove the badness of their cause, having recourse to the most unmitigated lying and calumny.

After two or three lesser false accusations had been successively disproved, they stated, that whilst a schismatical minister, named Ischyrras, was celebrating the Holy Mysteries at a certain village, Athanasius had sent one Macarius to throw down the altar, break the chalice, and burn the sacred books.

The answer was very concise. There was no Church there; Ischyrras was not a priest; there was no celebration on that day; there was no chalice in the place; Ischyrras was ill in bed on the day in question. In short, the whole statement was a pure fabrication.

The next accusation was far more serious. Athanasius had murdered a Meletian bishop named Arsenius, and had kept possession of his hand for magical purposes, and they could produce the dead man's hand in proof of their statement.

A council met at Tyre to investigate the matter, before which Athanasius was compelled to appear, with the threat that otherwise he should be carried there by force.

He appeared in company with forty-nine Egyptian bishops. Eusebius of Cæsarea sat as judge, and was severely called to task by one Potamon, who had been deprived of an eye in the great tenth persecution.

"Why do you," cried Potamon, "sit there, O Eusebius, to judge the innocent Athanasius? You and I were alike in danger in the Lord's cause during the persecution. I lost my eye; tell us, how did you escape uninjured?" No reply was returned to the charge thus insinuated; and amidst the applause of the Arian audience, charge after charge, involving the grossest falsehoods, was brought against Athanasius, and the excitement of the court culminated when, amidst cries of horror, the dead man's hand was brought in in a box and exposed to view.

Meanwhile Athanasius sat perfectly calm amidst the storm of outcries and reproaches, and when asked for his reply, calmly answered, "Do any of you know Arsenius?"

"Yes," was the reply, "we *knew* him well."

A witness was then led in, muffled in a large cloak, which being removed, the living Arsenius, who had been, as the accusers supposed, safely hidden away in a monastery of Upper Egypt, stood before them; and Athanasius, first showing one hand, then the other, asked whether God had given the man a *third* hand?

It will indeed excite the surprise of the reader to be informed that even after this the Arians raised the cry, "Sorcery! Sorcery!" that the spectators joined, and the civil authorities could only save the life of the saint by hurrying him on board a ship, which shortly afterwards sailed for Constantinople.

After he was gone the council appointed delegates to collect evidence upon the spot about the broken chalice, and, after new scenes of violence and perjury, condemned

Athanasius as if the accusations had been proved, and Arsenius himself signed the sentence.

Meanwhile Athanasius sailed for Constantinople, and the bishops proceeded to Jerusalem, where they dedicated the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, and solemnly recognized Arius and his companions, admitting them to communion.

On his arrival at Constantinople, Athanasius threw himself in the way of Constantine in the midst of the street, and demanded a hearing with such persistency, that the emperor could not refuse him, prejudiced although he was against the valiant archbishop. The consequence was, that Constantine summoned the bishops who had condemned Athanasius to appear before him, and to substantiate the charges. Most of them fled to their dioceses; but six of the boldest, with Eusebius of Nicomedia, and his namesake, the historian, amongst them, came to court, and dropping their former charges, which they knew they could not substantiate, accused Athanasius of endeavouring to prevent the departure of the corn fleet from Alexandria for Constantinople. They took the emperor on his weak side, and he banished Athanasius to Treves, where the Church received him with all due honour, and the government afforded him maintenance.

The Arians thought they had gained an entire victory, and hastened to enjoy its fruits by requiring Alexander, the aged Bishop of Constantinople, to admit Arius publicly to communion. The emperor afforded them his support, and sent his commands to Alexander. Eusebius of Nicomedia bore them, and menaced the aged saint with immediate deposition unless he consented to obey. "I cannot,"

was the reply. "Whether you consent or not, to-morrow he shall receive the Communion," said Eusebius. It was Saturday evening.

All that night Alexander lay extended in an agony of supplication before the Altar of his Church. "Let me die rather than see him brought to communion to-morrow; but in mercy to Thy Church take away Arius, take me or Arius from the world."

In the delirium of triumph Arius stalked through the city, his supporters attending him with shouts of triumph. He was in the highest spirits; he had triumphed over the Nicene Council. Suddenly, in the midst of the Forum, he was seized with sudden pain, and forced to withdraw from his friends to an adjoining place at the back of the Forum. Soon after a faintness came over him, as Socrates relates, and a violent internal disease, accompanied by a copious hæmorrhage, caused his death in a few minutes, to the utter confusion and horror of his partizans.

It is not wonderful that the Catholics saw in this solemn event the judgment of God.

Shortly after this event Constantine himself drew near his end. He had delayed Baptism up to this moment from a worldly dread of its responsibilities; but he now asked for the imposition of hands customary to those who became catechumens; and after the usual course of instruction, received Baptism from the hands of Eusebius of Nicomedia. He said, after the sacrament had been administered, that he felt supremely happy. "No words can tell," he exclaimed, "how precious is the gift I have received."

He retained the white robe peculiar to the newly-baptized during the short period of life yet remaining to him, and spent the whole time absorbed in contemplation of the great change, to which he was so rapidly hastening.

Whitsuntide, A.D. 337, dawned upon him, yet living, but they perceived that his end drew near, and they gathered around him. During the morning of that high festival his strength slowly ebbed, and at noon he breathed his last without a struggle.

They laid him in state on his couch, and kept the body several days, during which his officers came daily to see him, and to render him homage as if he yet lived. It was no vain formality; all felt that one was gone whose place would be filled with difficulty.

They buried him at Constantinople, in the magnificent Church which he had dedicated to "The Apostles." He had lived sixty-five years, and reigned thirty-one, in almost unbroken prosperity, saddened only by domestic misfortunes.

His character has been very diversely painted by friends and by foes: his merits were conspicuous, but so were his failings.

But his singular chastity and continence—singular indeed in so corrupt an age—his abhorrence of sensuality, render him a startling contrast to most of his predecessors. It is greatly to be regretted that he was seduced to favour the Arian cause in his later years; but the deceit, which seemed natural to the Arians, must plead his best excuse. Again and again they declared their innocence of the heresies imputed to them, even when in private they most

steadfastly maintained them. Again and again they declared they did not hold the doctrines condemned at Nicæa. They composed creeds so fair seeming, that a more acute theologian than Constantine might easily have been deceived.

Be this as it may, his name will never be forgotten as that of the *First Christian Emperor*; the hero who vanquished Maxentius, and bowed his victorious neck at the feet of the crucified Nazarene; whose glory was that cross which had been to his predecessors the very symbol of ignominy and shame.



## CHAPTER XIV.

### THE SONS OF CONSTANTINE.

A.D. 337-361.

HARDLY had the great Constantine been buried when a plot was formed to destroy many who had been dear to him by the ties of nature. The troops declaring that none but the sons of the late emperor deserved to bear rule, seized and imprisoned his half-brothers and the various members of the royal family, to await the arrival of Constantius; for his sons had not been with their dying father in the last moments of his existence.

Constantius shortly arrived; and this weak and vicious prince, who inherited his father's vices without his virtues, yielded to the wishes of the soldiery, even after he had pledged his word for the safety of his kinsmen. A general massacre of the captives ensued, in which the two uncles and the seven cousins of Constantius perished, besides several other of his relations; so that of the whole imperial family only Gallus and Julian, the sons of Julius Constantius, the half-brother of the late emperor, remained alive.

The three sons of Constantine proceeded to divide the

empire. Constantine, the eldest, was conceded a certain supremacy, and the possession of the imperial city, the Eastern capital; Constantius obtained Thrace and the East; and Constans, Italy, Africa, and the Western provinces.

The three princes had been admitted in childhood to the rank of catechumens, but they imitated their father in their delay respecting Baptism.

The same Arian Presbyter who had procured the recall of Arius, having been entrusted with the will of Constantine, which he presented to Constantius, gained free access to the palace, and the chief eunuch of the imperial bed-chamber, whose name was Eusebius, was induced by this Presbyter to receive the Arian doctrine.

Thence the poison spread throughout the palace, until the empress caught the infection through her favourite domestics. Shortly the subject was introduced to the emperor himself, and amongst the imperial attendants and guards, whence it reached the population of the city, so that in the family of each citizen there was a war of controversy.

At this moment Athanasius was restored to his bishopric by Constantine the younger, who attributed his banishment to Treves to his father's wish to preserve the saint from the ferocity of his foes, and stated that the late Emperor was only prevented by death from accomplishing his purpose of restoring Athanasius in person.

Accordingly Athanasius resumed his see amidst the exultation and joy of the population, and the Arians also resumed their plots against him.

At the beginning of the year A.D. 341, they met in council at Antioch, under the pretence of dedicating a splendid Church, built by the late emperor. There they passed a canon, unobjectionable in itself, but simply aimed at Athanasius, to the effect, that any bishop deposed by a synod, who should resume it without the sanction of the same or a higher synod, should thereby forfeit all claims to possession. They pretended, of course, that Athanasius had been legally deposed at Tyre, and, therefore, decreed that the see of Alexandria was vacant, and consecrated one Gregory, a villanous Cappadocian, to the post, who proceeded to take possession with the aid of a military force. Violent outrages were committed, and Athanasius driven to take refuge in Rome.

Meanwhile the Arians were employed in drawing up various creeds. They compiled four at Antioch in place of the simple Nicene formula; and, before the reign of Constantius was ended, had achieved the fabrication of nearly twenty, their object being generally to outwit the Catholics by words capable of a double meaning, which they could interpret in their own sense.

The outrages committed at Alexandria were surpassed at Constantinople. The aged Alexander was no more, and Paul had been elected to succeed him. The Arians contrived to trump up various charges against the bishop elect, and expelling him, gave the see to Eusebius of Nicomedia, who held it till his death, in 342, deprived the Arians of their most able and unscrupulous partizan.

Upon his death the Catholics elected Paul, the Arians Macedonius. Fearful scenes of violence took place, and

Constantius sent a military force to subdue the tumult, with no better result than the murder of its commander. Thereupon the emperor himself appeared on the scene, and the disturbance ended in the banishment of Paul and the installation of Macedonius amidst a tumult, wherein three thousand persons were trampled to death or slain by the soldiers. The Arians held the see for nearly forty years, with the exception of a brief period of two years, during which the unhappy Paul regained possession only to be banished to Armenia, where, after being long deprived of food, he was cruelly strangled.

At the end of three years from the expulsion of Athanasius, during which he had gained the unqualified support of Julius and the Roman clergy, he was summoned to the court of Milan by the emperor Constans, who professed a most lively regard for the Catholic Faith. Under his influence, a council was held at *Sardica*, on the verge of the dominions of Constantius, where ninety-four bishops of the Western encountered seventy-six of the Eastern Churches.

The Eastern bishops had been accustomed to rely upon the aid of the civil power to coerce their opponents, and when they found that there was simply a clear field and no favour in store for them, refused to attend the sessions, but shut themselves up in the palace, and declared they would not sit in company with "that sacrilegious chalice-breaker, the crafty Athanasius." Meanwhile the Western bishops were proceeding to discuss the state of affairs, and many prelates had sad tales to tell of Arian violence, while a letter from Alexandria moved the assembly even to tears.

The Eastern bishops, who were nearly all Arians, there-upon withdrew over the border to Philippolis, re-affirmed the excommunication of Athanasius, and included the Bishops of Rome, Cordova, Treves, and Sardica in their anathemas, calling themselves the Holy Council of Sardica with brazen effrontery. Meanwhile the true council stood manfully by Athanasius, excommunicated eleven of the chief Arians, and signed a decree in favour of the persecuted Bishop of Alexandria, to which nearly two hundred additional episcopal signatures were afterwards attached. Thus Athanasius, received as a saint in the West, was regarded as a criminal in the East.

So warmly, however, did Constans sympathize with him, that he at once requested his brother Constantius to comply with the decision of the Western bishops, signifying that if his application failed, he would himself, with a fleet and an army, restore the archbishop to the throne of Alexandria.

But such a necessity was averted, and the Emperor of the East hastened to seek a pretended reconciliation with the subject he had injured, assuring Athanasius, in three successive epistles, of his esteem, and dispatching strict instructions to Egypt to restore the adherents of his cause to their rights and privileges. Athanasius accordingly returned to Egypt through Thrace, Asia, and Syria. At Antioch he saw his imperial master, and received with modesty his embraces and protestations, evading the request that *one* Church might be given to the Arians at Alexandria, by requiring a similar indulgence for the Catholics at Antioch, which the Arians would not concede.

His entry into Alexandria was a triumphal procession. His authority was firmly established, and his fame diffused from Ethiopia to Britain.

If the emperor had desired the death of the most exalted of the laity of the empire, no resistance could have been offered to his despotic will. The difficulty which he found in condemning Athanasius, whom he really hated, shows what a great power Christianity had already become in the Roman world, and how, as Gibbon acknowledges, it had revived a sense of freedom in the Roman people.

But a most unhappy chance deprived Athanasius of his chief protector, the Emperor of the West. One Magnentius, a Frank, who commanded the imperial guards, plotted against his master, and while Constans was enjoying the pleasures of the chase near the city of Autun, in Gaul, gave a great entertainment to the principal officers of the army. Near midnight the host appeared clad in the imperial purple, and was saluted emperor by those in the secret, while the remainder, taken by surprise, joined in the acclamations. Immediate measures were taken to secure the person of Constans, but he obtained tidings while yet in the forest, and rode for Spain. He was, however, overtaken at the foot of the Pyrenees, when a few more hours would have placed him in safety, dragged from a Church to which he fled for refuge, and put to death.

The Pagan historians speak ill of Constans; but Athanasius testifies to his Christian spirit; and it is said of him, that he never attempted either to overawe a synod of the Church, or to persecute those with whom he disagreed.

*He* was a baptized Catholic, his brother Constantius an unbaptized Arian.

The death of Constans was avenged upon his murderer by his brother Constantius, after a very severe and protracted struggle. Magnentius was finally defeated at the bloody battle of Mursa, on September 28, A.D. 351. Constantius, leaving the command to his generals, spent the day in prayer in a neighbouring Church, and Valens, the Arian bishop of the place, having learned the result of the battle through a chain of scouts, announced it to him as the revelation of an angel, thus gaining great and permanent influence over the weak emperor. The usurper, after a lingering struggle, slew himself at Lyons.

Secure in the possession of the supreme power over the whole civilized world, Constantius hesitated no longer to pursue his designs for the destruction of Athanasius and the Catholic Faith.

A council was held at Arles, where the emperor insisted in vain upon the condemnation of Athanasius; which request was evaded by Liberius, Bishop of Rome, by an urgent request that a free council should be held at Milan. But the danger was only postponed, not removed. A council of nearly three hundred bishops was held at Milan, wherein the deceit and trickery of the Arians, and the coarse tyranny of the emperor, who overawed the meeting by his personal presence, attended by an armed force, led to the condemnation of Athanasius, and the toleration of the Arian heresy. When it was objected that the acts required of the council exceeded their legitimate power,

Constantius replied, "Whatever I will is to be esteemed a canon. Such is the case with the bishops of Syria." It is easy to infer how the Arians gained their great ascendancy over his weak but violent temperament.

A general persecution followed. Many Catholic bishops were sent into exile, and their places filled by Arians. It seemed as if the days of Decius had returned. The punishments of death, exile, and confiscation were inflicted with great rigour. Branding with hot irons and formidable weapons became the familiar expedients of the Arians. Desperate conflicts took place, so that the churches were stained with blood. Baptism and Communion were forced by the Arians upon their opponents, the very mouths of the communicants being distended for the latter purpose by some wooden contrivance, while the breasts of recalcitrant virgins were burnt by red-hot egg-shells, or inhumanly compressed between sharp boards. A large district of Paphlagonia was inhabited by the Novatians, who, differing from the Catholics but in questions of discipline, were equally obnoxious to the Arians. The peasantry resisted the troops who were sent by Macedonius upon a mission to convert them to Arianism. The Novatians were victorious, and four thousand of the soldiers were left dead upon the field of battle. Whole troops of Catholics and Novatians were in consequence slaughtered in the provinces, and many towns and villages laid waste and utterly destroyed.

The fate of Liberius of Rome was a very sad one. It was not martyrdom in the common sense of the word. It would have been far better for him had it been.



When Constantius, swayed by his Arian eunuchs, who ruled the empire, had pronounced his exile for refusing to join in the condemnation of Athanasius, the fear they entertained of a tumult led them to take great precautions in the execution of the sentence. The capital was invested on every side, and the prefect of the city commanded to seize the person of the bishop at all hazards.

The order was obeyed. Liberius was seized at midnight, and conveyed from the city before his faithful flock could suspect his danger. When they found he was gone, their consternation developed into rage; and when they further heard that he was banished into Thrace, clergy and people bound themselves by an oath never to desert their bishop, or to acknowledge the usurper Felix, whom the Arians had chosen to be bishop of Rome, and had consecrated, not in a church, but in the palace.

Two years passed away, and still the flock remained faithful; so that when Constantius visited Rome, the wives and daughters of the citizens besieged him with intreaties to restore their bishop. His answer was publicly read in the amphitheatre. Felix and Liberius should reign together.

But this did not suit the wishes of the people, and they cried with one voice, "One God, one Christ, one bishop." Their zeal found vent in such tumults that Constantius determined to entice Liberius to some act of submission if possible, and in that case to restore him.

He succeeded but too well. Liberius was led to write to the Orientals: "I do not defend Athanasius; I have been convinced he was justly condemned." Adding that he

accepted the Catholic Faith of the *Oriental*s; i.e. a semi-Arian creed.

S. Hilary, who transcribes his letter, comments thus upon it: "This is the perfidious Arian Faith. Anathema to thee, Liberius."

He was restored to his bishopric, and thus in the latter part of the year 357 the Roman See lost the purity of its faith.

The fall of Hosius of Cordova, the aged bishop who had presided at Nicæa, the friend of the great Constantine, is yet more sad.

After the Council of Milan, he declared himself ready to suffer under Constantius as his predecessors had suffered under that emperor's grandfather, Maximian, and in the presence of the tyrant asserted the innocence of the great bishop. Banished to Bercea, in Thrace, he even returned the money sent for his journey, saying that the emperor and his eunuchs would want it to pay their soldiers and *bishops*. But his resolution gave way beneath want and exile, during which he was repeatedly and savagely beaten, and even placed upon the rack, although a hundred years of age. Broken in body, and probably, as we must remember, weakened and impaired in mind by reason of his sufferings and his great age, he signed an Arian creed at Sirmium, and was sent home to die. He survived two years, during which he never knew peace of mind, and with his last breath retracted his signature. It would be the mark of a very severe disposition to judge the aged prelate harshly. We may reserve our indignation for the persecutors.

About the same time S. Cyril of Jerusalem, whose

episcopate dated from the year 349, was deposed by an Arian synod summoned by Acacius of Cæsarea on the ground that he had sold the ornaments of the Church to provide food for the poor. The true motive was, that, although ordained by the Arians, he confessed the Catholic Faith; for although he did not use the Nicene terminology in its fulness, yet his real orthodoxy was too manifest to please them. It is, however, to be regretted that in the weary exile which followed he yielded somewhat to the sophistry of the semi-Arians. He was indeed one of those of whom Athanasius said, "Their hearts are with us; they are brethren who mean what we mean, but express it in different words." And in this light we must look upon his difficulty with regard to the test-word, *Homousion*.

After the submission of Liberius and Hosius the whole fury of the Arians fell upon the great Athanasius, whose immortal name, says Gibbon, will never be disjoined from the Catholic doctrine of the Trinity, to the defence of which he consecrated every moment and every faculty of his being. It was not till the Latin bishops deserted him that Constantius ventured upon the final measures for his destruction.

The popularity of Athanasius was so great at Alexandria that the civil power in Egypt was inadequate to the task Constantius would impose upon it, and therefore the legions of the Upper Nile and of Libya were ordered to advance by forced marches, and to surround the city. Arriving, they were introduced by night into the capital, before the citizens suspected danger, or could take up arms.

At the hour of midnight, Syrianus, the Roman governor,

accompanied by no less than five thousand soldiers, armed and prepared for any emergency, surrounded the church of S. Theonas, where Athanasius, with a large congregation of clergy and laity, were keeping a vigil preparatory to a general Communion.

The archbishop, with perfect calmness, bade the deacon read the 136th Psalm, and the people to chant the refrain, "For His mercy endureth for ever," when the doors yielded to the impetuosity of the attack. A loud shout was followed by a deadly discharge of arrows. The swords flashed in the light of the lamps, while the soldiers trampled all under foot, in their eagerness to seize the person of the archbishop. But in their blind fury they defeated their own purpose, and sought in vain in the tumult for the object of their hatred, whose flock, in their devotion, impeded the search at the sacrifice of life or limb. The other churches of the city were profaned by similar outrages; and for at least four months Alexandria was exposed to all the insults of a licentious army. Many of the Faithful were killed; bishops and priests treated with cruel ignominy; virgins stripped, scourged, and violated; the houses of wealthy citizens plundered; lust, avarice, and private revenge, all gratified under the name of religion.

Pagans and Arians joined together to commit these cruel outrages; burning altars, and actually singing hymns to the heathen deities within the desecrated sanctuaries; while the Pagans rejoiced that Constantius had, as they supposed, become a Pagan himself, and they searched even the sepulchres to discover the retreat of Athanasius.

Meanwhile the Catholics wrote to Constantius to know whether all this was done by his authority; to which he boldly replied that it was, and that all the churches in the city must be given up to the Arian successor of Athanasius, the infamous George of Cappadocia, who had made his fortune by cheating the army, which he supplied with bacon, and who, being consecrated by the Arians, arrived in the Lent of 356, as his like-minded predecessor, Gregory, had arrived in the Lent of 341.

In his blind and passionate epistle, Constantius likened himself to the great Alexander, the founder of the city; expatiated upon the piety and virtue of the most reverend George; and congratulated the populace on their delivery from that tyrant Athanasius, who by his flight had confessed his guilt, and escaped the ignominious death he had deserved.

Athanasius had withdrawn into the wilderness until this tyranny should be overpast. On the memorable night when the church of S. Theonas was invested by the imperial troops, seated upon his throne in the sanctuary, he had awaited, with calm and intrepid dignity, the approach of death. Even when the gleam of the armour reflected the "holy luminaries which burnt around the altar," he nobly refused to desert his station till his people were safe. The lights must have been extinguished in the tumult; for although he was thrown to the ground by the pressure of the throng, he left the church unrecognized, and eluded the eager search of the soldiers, who had been assured that the head of Athanasius was the most acceptable present they could offer to the emperor. From that

moment he disappeared from the eyes of his enemies for the space of six whole years.

The despotic power of his imperial adversary filled the whole civilized world ; and even the Christian princes of Ethiopia were implored by letter to aid in the search for Athanasius.

It would have been almost impossible for a political fugitive to have escaped the pressing search now instituted. Prefects, tribunes, whole armies were employed, immense rewards were offered for his person, alive or dead, but all in vain.

At this time the deserts of the Thebaid were populated by devout men, who, following the example and guidance of the great Antony, had found a refuge from the temptations of the world amidst the beasts of the desert. But two years before this, Antony, the very story of whose life, as told by Athanasius, was instrumental in the conversion of the great S. Augustine, had seen a vision of mules kicking at the Tables of the Lord, by which the Arian persecution was foretold to him ; and just before the scene in the church of S. Theonas the news of his death was brought to Alexandria. Still many holy men were left who had founded communities—Macarius, Pambo, Theodore, and Stephen, who, while he was suffering amputation of the leg, continued patiently to weave palm leaves into a basket, reminding his brethren that what God wills must come to a good end. To these quiet sanctuaries Athanasius fled. They were to him as the hill of Zion, whereon fell the dew of Hermon, so sweet was their calm repose to his wearied spirit.

The numerous disciples of Antony and Pachomius received him as their father, admired the patient humility with which he conformed to their institutions, collected every word which fell from his lips as the words of inspired wisdom, and braved every danger in the cause of truth and innocence. Their monasteries were situate in lonely and desolate places on the slopes of the Libyan mountains, the islands of the Upper Nile, or in the verdant oases which formed islands of verdure in the sea of sand. The signal of the sacred trumpet assembled thousands of these devoted monks and hermits for mutual worship, or such self-defence as their rule permitted. Amongst this well-disciplined and uniform multitude the archbishop was lost, and on the near approach of danger was removed from oasis to oasis, from monastery to monastery, till his enemies, who several times thought they had him within their very grasp, imputed his repeated disappearance to magic acts.

This retirement, which ended only with the life of Constantius, was spent for the most part in the society of the monks, who were his guards, his secretaries, and his messengers; but the importance of maintaining a correspondence with the leaders of the Catholic party tempted him once or twice into the city itself, where his very life was in the utmost danger. His various adventures have all the charm of romance. Once hidden in a cave, to which the soldiers followed him, the web which a spider spun over the entrance convinced the foe that he could not be hidden there.

Once he escaped their pressing search, while in the city, by hiding in a dry cistern, which retreat he had scarcely

left before his foes were guided to the spot by a treacherous slave ; indeed, so constant were his escapes, that he might well believe himself under the protection of a special providence.

Yet such was his noble daring, that, adventuring his life in the midst of his foes, he tells us that he saw, in person, the Councils of Rimini and Seleucia, held during his disappearance.

From the depths of those inaccessible retreats, which the popular imagination peopled with savage beasts, and yet more awful demons, he waged an unintermitting war against the Arians ; and his writings, which from time to time appeared, animated yet more the determination of his foes to seize him alive or dead, and stimulated their baffled rage to frenzy ; but especially when fresh epistles justly reproached Constantius as the murderer of his family, the tyrant of his country, and the Antichrist of the Church, and warned him to anticipate the judgment of God.

Meanwhile the cruelties of the Arians at Alexandria never ceased, but grew worse under the personal direction of the infamous George. On the Sunday after Pentecost, the Faithful, banished the Churches, had assembled in a cemetery without the city, when the governor, Sebastian, at the instigation of this Arian bishop, fell upon them with three thousand soldiers, and inflicted the most cruel tortures upon both men and women, the savages gnashing their teeth as the victims called upon Christ. Athanasius tells us that the Arians sat around the tombs to prevent the burial of their victims.

The Arians appeared to be everywhere triumphant ; but



internal dissensions, hitherto very skilfully concealed, now made their appearance.

There may be said to have been three principal parties amongst the Arians. First, the semi-Arians, or Homoi-ousians, who, accepting the evasive creeds their fathers had drawn up in a better and truer sense than their framers had intended, differed only from the Catholics in denying the identity, while they admitted the *likeness*, of Substance in the Father and the Son. These men Athanasius spoke of as *brethren* whose hearts were in the right place, although not formally orthodox.

*Secondly* came the Eunomians, or Anomœans, who carried the principles of Arius to their extreme logical results, and maintained that the Son, as being created, was necessarily *unlike* the Father in all things, and only knew His will as revealed through His works. A necessary corollary of this doctrine was the denial of the Sacramental system of the Church.

*Thirdly* may be mentioned the Acacians; so called from their leader, Acacius of Cæsarea. They had no definite principles. Agreeing with the Anomœans when it was safe to do so, they took shelter with the semi-Arians in time of danger. They rejected on all possible occasions both the Homoiouision, "being of the same substance," and the Homoiousion, "being of like substance" (with the Father).

The leaders of the semi-Arians, to which party the emperor himself belonged, were Basil of Ancyra and George of Laodicea, and nearly the whole of the Eastern Bishops shared their belief. The leaders of the Anomœans

were Aetius and his pupil Eunomius, from whom their followers were frequently called "Aëtians" and "Eunomians." Acacius of Cæsarea gave, as we have seen, his name to the third party.

In the year 359 the semi-Arians besought Constantius to summon a council to decide all these points of dispute; but the Acacians, who loved darkness rather than light, being unable to prevent such a council being summoned, contrived to divide it, so that they might bring all their influence to bear upon each portion separately. They prevailed, insomuch that the Western Bishops were summoned to meet at Ariminum, and the Easterns at Seleucia, ten deputies from each council afterwards having to meet in the presence of Constantius.

Four hundred and fifty bishops assembled at Ariminum, in May (A.D. 359); and the Acacians drew up for them a creed in which the Son was declared to be "like the Father in all things according to the Scriptures." It is manifest that both the Homocousion and the Homoiousion, being thus avoided, each party might sign the creed, affixing its own sense to it. For a long time the bishops at Ariminum hesitated. At last, yielding to the combined influence of the court and the crafty Acacians, they signed the defective creed, and returned home to ponder at their leisure upon the meaning of the act. The whole world, says S. Jerome, groaned to find itself *Arian*. The bishops, returning home, fathomed the depths of Arian subtlety, and repudiated the creed they had signed. The Eastern Council met at Seleucia, in September, where S. Hilary of Poitiers, who had been banished into Phrygia,

was present to take part in the deliberations ; but it was dissolved in utter confusion. Both semi-Arians and Acacians refused any compromise, and the case was finally referred, after the Arian fashion, to the emperor, who deposed Aetius from the diaconate, and banished the leaders of the semi-Arians. Constantius ordered that the Creed of Ariminum should be signed by all parties, and commenced severe measures against the insubordinate. It was no wonder that the heathen derided the Christians as having yet to learn their own faith. But suddenly the whole support of the Arians collapsed. The reed, upon which they leant, broke. Constantius, summoned, as we shall hereafter see, to meet his rebellious cousin Julian, died of a burning fever at Mopsucrene, near Tarsus, in Cilicia. Although he had taken so prominent a part in ecclesiastical matters, he was only baptized shortly before his death by the Arian Bishop of Antioch.

During the reign of Constantius the Christians of Persia sustained a most grievous persecution with heroic courage. During the days when the empire persecuted the Faith there had been comparative peace and safety in the East; but now that Christianity was the religion of the Cæsars, it became hateful in the eyes of their national foes, those of the house of Sapor. The change which we have already described, whereby the Persians regained their ancient supremacy, had completely changed the whole character of the administration of the East. The new dynasty manifested a vigour and courage contrasting in every point with the effeminate characteristics of their pre-

decessors, who fell before the arms of Alexander the Great.

But the change was an evil one for the Christians. The Persians were devout fire-worshippers, and completely under the influence of their magi or priests. They held the co-existence of two eternal beings of equal power: the one, Ormuzd, good; the other, Ahriman, evil; whence the Manichæan heresy derived its system of "dualism."

But it was not till nearly a century had passed, and the Faith was dominant in the Roman Empire, that the Eastern Christians had in turn to pass through the furnace of affliction.

Symeon was then Archbishop of Seleucia and Ctesiphon, royal cities of Persia, a man of noble countenance and persuasive eloquence, whom Sapor, the Persian monarch, had even honoured with his friendship. But an intense jealousy of Rome, produced by continual warfare, disposed Sapor to persecute Christianity, so soon as he understood that it had become the adopted religion of his rivals; and he listened to an accusation made by the Jews, that Symeon had communicated information to his enemies of his designs.

He gave orders that the clergy should be slain with the sword, and their churches demolished—an order the Jews and magi hastened to put into effect; and he commanded Symeon, bound with chains, to be brought before him.

"Why dost thou not prostrate thyself before me as of old?" asked the king.

"Formerly," replied the bishop, "I was not led away bound, that I might be forced to abjure the truth of God,

and I did not refuse the customary homage. Now I stand in defence of my Faith."

"If thou wilt be advised, and worship the Sun, I will bestow many gifts upon thee, and bring thee to great honour; otherwise grievous destruction awaiteth thee and thy followers," said the king.

But Symeon firmly refused to worship the Sun, or to betray his religion. Whereupon Sapor ordered him to be confined with cruel bonds in prison, hoping that in solitude and darkness he would change his mind.

As he was being conducted to prison, Usthazanes, an aged eunuch, the foster-father of Sapor, who had formerly been a Christian, but had denied his religion, arose to do him reverence, but Symeon forbade him, as an apostate, to do so; whereupon Usthazanes, deeply moved, dressed himself in black and wept bitterly, seated in front of the palace, exclaiming, "Woe is me, for I have denied my God!" When Sapor heard this, he called the eunuch to him and enquired the cause of his grief, whereupon Usthazanes bravely confessed his restored Faith and deplored his fall. Sapor, deeply enraged, strove, first by severity, and afterwards by gentleness, to bring him over to his own sentiments; but failing, he commanded that he should die by the sword.

When the executioners came forward, Usthazanes made his dying request to the king, that the "crime" for which he suffered should be proclaimed to all, "that he lost his head simply for being a Christian and refusing to deny his God;" and so he died. The king complied with his last request, and Symeon thereby hearing of the event, offered

fervent thanks to God. The following day the king issued orders that he should share the same fate, after a hundred other Christians had first been slain before his face, including bishops, priests, deacons, and many of the laity. It was Good Friday, A.D. 349.

The magi strove in vain to turn them from their constancy. Symeon exhorted them by words of inspired eloquence, bidding them remember that to die for Christ was to live for ever, and that although death was the common lot of all, it was their happy lot to glorify God by their deaths, and enter upon eternal reward; and so they died bravely, one and all. Pusicus, the superintendent of the king's artizans, perceiving one of them, Ananias, a presbyter, to tremble as he beheld the preparations for his death, he exclaimed, "Be firm, O Ananias, and you will soon behold the light of Christ!" No sooner had he spoken than he was seized and led before the king, to whom he said that he desired no better reward than to die as these martyrs had died.

His wish was granted; but he was condemned to a more cruel death than theirs. The executioners pierced the muscles of his neck in such a manner as to extract his tongue, and his daughter, a virgin, shared his fate.

A most intense and fearful persecution followed. The king's appetite for blood was whetted, and between Good Friday and the second Sunday after Easter, it is stated that sixteen thousand of all ranks and ages suffered martyrdom.

Tarbula, the sister of Symeon, with her sister and servant, were sawn asunder. At Adiabene, Aceptimus the bishop,

and a multitude of his clergy and flock, suffered most excruciating tortures; for the ingenuity of the Persians in devising cruel modes of death was notorious at that period. The effect of this persecution was obvious. It taught all the Christians of the East to pray for the preservation and extension of the Roman dominion, since thereby the Faith was cherished and fostered.

The effect of this feeling was strongly shown on the occasion of the subsequent siege of Nisibis, a frontier town, the possession of which was again and again disputed between Persian and Roman. It had been taken by a former Sapor in the days of Valerian, shortly before the ignominious death of that unhappy monarch, and now it was again besieged. But the people, animated by their valiant bishop, S. James of Nisibis, made one of the most heroic defences recorded in history, until the condition of the besiegers became intolerable, and swarms of stinging insects and gnats, bred perhaps by the operation of the summer heat upon the offals of the camp, but ascribed by the Christian writers to a miracle, completed the discomfiture of Sapor, and he raised the siege.

## CHAPTER XV.

### JULIAN THE APOSTATE.

A.D. 361-363.

CONSTANTINE the Great had two half-brothers, Dalmatius and Constantius, the offspring of Constantius the elder, by his second marriage. The younger of these had two sons, who were named Gallus and Julian, and who alone survived the massacre of their kinsfolk which followed the death of Constantine.

They were mere boys at that time, Gallus being about twelve years of age, and Julian only in his sixth year. A disease which threatened to be fatal preserved Gallus from the violence of his father's murderers, while Julian is said to have been concealed in a Church by Mark, Bishop of Arethusa.

The jealousy of Constantius having subsided, Gallus attended the schools at Ephesus, and Julian at Constantinople. They were carefully kept from Pagan preceptors, lest the purity of their faith should be endangered, and were baptized at an early age.

After some years had passed, Constantius committed the government of Antioch and the East to Gallus, then in his twenty-fifth year, but he proved himself in every



way unfit to rule, filling his palace with instruments of torture and death, and governing with such mingled weakness and cruelty, that general insecurity of life and property prevailed. Constantius, shocked at the intelligence, sent one Domitian, a prefect, to remonstrate with him. The ambassador acted somewhat peremptorily, and, at the instigation of Gallus, was slain by the soldiers.

Constantius was greatly perplexed. He feared to take very decisive measures lest Gallus should rebel, and involve the empire in civil war. Therefore he wrote a kind and soothing letter, entreating him to come to assist in the affairs of the West, adding an epistle to his sister, the wife of Gallus, in which he expressed great desire to see her.

Husband and wife, seduced by this conduct, set out together. Constantina died on the way, in Bithynia. Gallus reached Macedonia, when he was seized as a prisoner, stripped of his royal dress, and carried to Pola, in Istria, where the unhappy Crispus had died. Here he was kept but a short while in suspense, before he underwent an examination concerning his conduct in the East, and, confessing his criminal acts, was beheaded in prison.

Of all the numerous relations of the great Constantine, Julian alone survived; and the eunuchs plotted against his life also. His innocence might have availed him little, had he not found a protector in the Empress Eusebia, who exercised a great influence over Constantius. He was permitted to retire to Athens, to complete his studies, in the year 355, after the death of his brother.

Both Gallus and Julian had been instructed in the Articles of the Christian Faith, but under the doubtful influence of Eusebius of Nicomedia, the champion of the Arians. Although Constantius himself shrunk from the responsibilities of Baptism, yet he forced his young cousins to incur them, and Julian became a "reader" in the Church of Nicomedia.

But secretly he conceived an intense dislike to the religion in which he was educated, identifying it with Constantius, the murderer of his family, and with the miserable squabbles, intrigues, and paltry actions of the Arians by whom he was surrounded.

The imperfections of the Christians were open to his view; the heathen heroes of antiquity only lived in the pages of history and romance; and the brilliant colours with which the poets invested the Pagan Olympus, or the deeds of ancient Roman glory, contrasted forcibly with the human weaknesses which surrounded him. According to his own account, he still believed in Christianity until he attained his twentieth year, when, after being privately instructed by certain Pagan philosophers, he secretly renounced his Faith, and was initiated into the heathen mysteries at Ephesus. During his short sojourn at Athens, a few years later, while still dissembling his change of opinions, he was initiated also into the mysteries of Eleusis.

Constantius had not the least suspicion of the fact, nor did the Empress Eusebia suspect the good faith of her *protégé*, who continued to attend the services of the Church while the important secret of his apostacy was intrusted

to the fidelity of the initiated, with whom he was now connected by the closest ties of friendship and religion.

But he consulted his safety, aspiring to the glory of a hero, and not to that of a martyr; for his situation as the heir presumptive would have doubtless excepted him from the toleration generally accorded to less distinguished Pagans.

Therefore he constrained himself to be present at the celebration of the Divine Mysteries on the Christian festivals, and returned with the impatience of a lover to burn his *voluntary* incense on the domestic altars of Jupiter or Mercury. His faithful friend, the orator Libanius, tells us that he lived in a perpetual intercourse with gods and goddesses, and that they descended upon earth to enjoy the conversation of their favourite hero, who amidst general apostacy was faithful to the traditions of his fathers.

Meanwhile, by the influence of Eusebia, Constantius was induced to associate Julian with him in the toils and cares of empire, with the subordinate title of Cæsar, which had been borne by his brother, the unhappy Gallus. No greater proof could be afforded of the secrecy with which his change of religion had been concealed.

He left Athens with great regret, for he was deeply attached to the life of a philosopher; was kindly received at Milan; married the emperor's sister Helena; and, amidst the acclamations of the legions, received the title of Cæsar on his twenty-fifth birthday. He was immediately sent to take the government of Gaul.

He found it in fearful confusion. The Franks and

Germans had burnt no less than forty-five cities, including those now known as Treves, Cologne, Strasburg, Worms, and Spirea. His career was a very glorious one from a military point of view. He won a great victory over the Germans near Strasburg, crossed the Rhine near Mayence, wasted the hostile territory; in a second campaign forced the Franks to sue for mercy, and in a third campaign the Germans also.

Twenty thousand captives were delivered, and the barbarians forced to rebuild the towns they had destroyed. A fleet of six hundred vessels conveyed corn from Britain to the devastated provinces, and Julian took up his abode at his favourite city Lutetia, now Paris. Meanwhile Constantius had contracted a deep distrust of his nephew, and fearing his ambition, conceived a scheme for depriving him of the power to rebel.

He ordered Julian to send four entire divisions of the Gallic army, and drafts of three hundred from each other division, to serve in the far East.

These divisions had only entered the service upon the condition that they should not be called upon to serve southward of the Alps, and when Julian urged them (sincerely or otherwise) to obedience, they replied by proclaiming him emperor. His resistance was of no avail, and he was distinctly assured that, if he wished to live, he must consent to reign.

He resisted no longer, but, still anxious to spare the effusion of blood which would attend civil war, obtained from his troops an assurance that, if Constantius would remain content with the dominions south and east of the

Alps, they would remain quietly in Gaul. So he wrote to Constantius, excusing his conduct on the plea of necessity, and desiring to be confirmed in the dignity which had been forced upon him, still offering to recognize the supremacy of the elder emperors.

While awaiting the return of the ambassadors, he took up his abode at Vienne, and went publicly to church for the last time, on Christmas-day, A.D. 360.

The ambassadors of Julian met with so many unforeseen obstacles and delays, that they did not reach Constantius until he had started for the East, on his way to the Persian war. They overtook him at Cappadocia, and delivered their message. The Empress Eusebia, who might have persuaded Constantius to hear reason, was dead, and he was in such a rage that he dismissed the trembling messengers with indignation and contempt, while the most furious language expressed the disorder of his passions.

But the necessity of the situation forced him to suspend his design of punishment, and he thought it sufficient to require that the presumptuous Cæsar should renounce his pretensions and trust to his mercy. Several months were consumed in negotiations, carried on at the distance of three thousand miles, between Paris and Antioch, and at length Julian determined to trust all to the chance of war. Immediately, as if there were no further occasion to dissemble, he publicly renounced Christianity, and committed his cause to the "immortal gods."

Thereupon he threw himself, at the head of a band of devoted followers, into the recesses of the Black Forest, disappeared from the civilized world for many days, and

trusting his forces to the stream of the Danube, suddenly appeared near Sirmium before his enemies knew he had left the Rhine.

While the Pagan hero thus pursued his course, the Arian emperor left Antioch to meet him. It was winter, and Constantius was ill, but could not postpone his ardent desire for revenge.

But his illness was increased by the excitement and fatigue of the march, and when he arrived at Mopsucrene, near Tarsus, in Cilicia, the birth-place of S. Paul, he could proceed no further; and after a prolonged death-struggle, during which his flesh was as fire to the touch, he expired in the forty-fifth year of his age and the twenty-fourth of his reign. The unhappy monarch has found panegyrists amongst the Arians; but he was ever the bitter foe of Catholic Truth, and the weakness with which he yielded to his eunuchs and Arian advisers led him to many gross acts of cruelty and despotism. His character was like, yet unlike, that of his mighty father. Subtract the virtues from Constantine which he undoubtedly possessed, and we have Constantius.

The chief officers of the army hastened to meet Julian, who had now been joined by his whole forces, with tidings of the death of Constantius, and saluted him as emperor, assuring him that every sword in the empire would be drawn in his service. Entering Constantinople amidst the acclamations of the people, he took possession of the imperial palace, and made a complete clearance of all the eunuchs and other ministers of luxury, to the number of several thousands. He was not severe in his political

measures, still he appointed a commission, to which he gave absolute power of life or death, before whom the ministers of the late emperor were tried. Eusebius, the chief of the eunuchs, and a few others, were condemned to death; and one Paul, who had been the chief instrument of tyranny, was burnt alive.

Such multitudes of suitors, especially Egyptians, came to seek redress from former exactions, that Julian caused them all to repair to Chalcedon, on the other side of the water, promising to meet them in person, and then remained at Constantinople, and issued an absolute order that no one should ferry them over to the imperial city, a very original mode of escaping trouble.

But the great design which animated the mind of Julian was the *extirpation of Christianity*, and the restoration of the Pagan religion. He condescended to write a justification of the step he had taken; but the Christians had far more to fear from his power than from his arguments; and the Pagans eagerly expected a bloody persecution, which should eclipse all that had ever yet taken place, and that the ingenious malice of Julian would invent some cruel refinement of death and torture unknown to his clumsy predecessors.

But they were disappointed. Julian was wise enough to know that persecution had strengthened, and would strengthen, the Faith of the Gospel, and that, by imitating Diocletian, he should but stain his memory, and add fresh glories to the Church. Again, it is questionable whether an edict like that of Diocletian would not have kindled the flames of civil war throughout the empire; for the

Christians were, perhaps, the more numerous body, and, as a study of the Arian persecutions sufficiently shows, had ceased to feel themselves bound to *passive* resistance.

Therefore he resolved upon two lines of conduct, which he supposed would be more effectual. First, to restore the sanction of authority to Paganism, and to labour to purify it from its grosser corruptions, transferring whatsoever he thought worthy of imitation in Christianity to the older system ; and secondly, to load Christianity with ignominy and ridicule, and to do all in his power to increase and intensify its divisions.

Therefore he began by proclaiming toleration to all religions, recalling the banished Catholics, Donatists, Novatians, and others who had been exiled by Constantius, with the design of fomenting the intestine divisions of the Church, while he commanded all the Pagan temples to be rebuilt at the expense of those who had destroyed them, which gave rise to no little persecution, as the Christians would not restore the temples they had ruined.

Meanwhile the emperor excited the amazement, and even the contempt, of his subjects, by his zeal in the service of the gods. Amidst the licentious crowd of priests or female dancers, he brought the wood, blew the fire, handled the knife, and thrust his blood-stained hand into the bowels of the expiring animal to learn the secrets of futurity. The wisest of the Pagans deplored this extravagant superstition, which outraged imperial decency.

A hundred oxen were frequently sacrificed by the emperor in one day, and it became a frequent jest, that if he returned triumphant from the impending Persian war, the



breed of horned cattle would become extinct. Encouraged by his example, the Pagans everywhere renewed their ancient rites and ceremonies. "Every part of the world," says Libanius, with some exaggeration, "displayed the triumph of religion, and the grateful prospect of flaming altars, bleeding victims, the smoke of incense, and a solemn train of priests and prophets, without fear and without danger. The sound of prayer and of music was heard on the tops of the highest mountains, and the same ox afforded a sacrifice for the gods and a supper for their joyous votaries."

But no genius or imperial patronage could restore life to the dead. Paganism was no longer a living reality; it was but a galvanized corpse, without theology, morality, or discipline. It could not survive the rude shock it had already received; and although Julian complimented Christianity by a wholesale adaptation of its hierarchy and morality to Pagan institutions, in his character as Pontifex Maximus, yet the transplanted institutions withered away like flowers torn from their roots, and inserted into the soil of a child's toy-garden.

Multitudes of those whose Christianity had been merely nominal, transferred their allegiance to the restored rites, and the apostacy was very general in the army and court, so that Julian had the pleasure of announcing to his favourite philosophers, that the soldiers assisted, with fervent devotion and *voracious* appetite, at the sacrifice of whole hecatombs of fat oxen. We can easily believe that they possessed the latter qualification.

Yet there were many noble exceptions. On a certain

festival, Julian ordered each soldier to throw incense into the sacrificial fire on the reception of a donation.

Many absolutely refused; but some who, without thinking of the meaning of the act, had complied, were so overwhelmed afterwards with remorse, that, throwing down the gold, they besought the honour of martyrdom from the emperor, which he would not grant; but at the same time he took secret measures to remove by degrees all Christian soldiers from the army, which he probably looked upon as his last resource, in case he failed to restore Paganism by gentler and subtler measures.

About this time Maris, Bishop of Chalcedon, in Bithynia, a man of extreme age and totally blind, caused himself to be led into the emperor's presence, that he might rebuke his apostacy. Julian simply retorted by abusive language. "You blind old fool," said he, "this Galilæan God of yours cannot cure you."

Maris replied with stern boldness, "I thank God for bereaving me of my sight, lest I should behold the face of one who has fallen into such awful iniquity." It is greatly to the credit of Julian, that he did not resent this daring rebuke.

Early in his reign a great disturbance occurred at Alexandria, which resulted in the death of the intruding prelate, George, and the restoration of the great Athanasius.

There was a shrine in that city which had long been abandoned to neglect and filth, but wherein the Pagans had formerly celebrated their mysteries, and offered human sacrifices to Mithras. This being empty, Constantius had granted it to the Church, and George, wishing to erect a

church upon the site, gave orders that the place should be cleansed and purified. During the process an *adytum* of vast depth was discovered, which unveiled the character of those impious rites; for *there* were found the skulls of many persons of all ages, who had been immolated for the purpose of divination by the inspection of their entrails.

The Christians, on discovering these abominations, thought it their duty to make them known to all, and carried the remains through the city in procession for the inspection of the people. When the Pagans beheld this, they were so enraged that they assaulted the procession with whatever weapons came first to hand, and killing some Christians with the sword, others with clubs and stones, carried away captives, whom they crucified in derision of Christianity. During the riot they dragged George out of a church, fastened him to a camel, and, when they had torn him in pieces, burnt him, together with the camel.\*

When tidings of this event reached Julian, he rebuked their violence. But it must be allowed that the whole episcopate of the murdered bishop had been one of the grossest tyranny and misrule; that he had governed, by the assistance of Constantius, rather like a barbarian conqueror than a Christian bishop. He had acquired a monopoly of the commonest necessities of life, such as salt, nitre, paper, and had even levied a tax upon funerals; so that Catholic and Pagan had alike suffered; and the occasion given by the purification of the Temple of Mithras was only the spark which kindled the inflammable material.

\* Socrates, b. iii. c. 2.

When the tumult had subsided, Athanasius, who had been in retreat for six or seven years, suddenly reappeared, and, amidst public acclamations of joy, resumed his functions. The Pagans, who recognized his manly character and justice, acquiesced, and order was restored to the city. But this was not according to the will of Julian; and although he had issued the edict restoring all banished bishops, he made Athanasius an honourable exception; for the labours of the great prelate were dangerous to his schemes. Despising other Christians, he dreaded Athanasius.

The labours of that great saint had not been confined to Egypt. In this moment of extreme danger, not merely to Catholicism, but to Christianity, he had actually the office of ecclesiastical dictator thrust upon him. He was precisely the man for the day. Firm as a rock in his belief, yet quite capable of perceiving the good faith which lay beneath the incorrect phraseology of men like the semi-Arians, he admitted all those who had erred in signing the imperfect creed of Ariminum into communion, on the simple condition of their signing the Nicene formula, and required no further recantation. It was no moment for intestine struggles when edicts enjoining apostacy or death might any day meet the eye in the Forum. And a council held at Alexandria gave its sanction to the judicious proceedings of the great patriarch.

In the midst of all this labour came the proof how highly Julian esteemed his talents. An edict arrived, banishing him not only from Alexandria, but from the whole of Egypt: nor could the entreaties of the citizens move the emperor in the least degree to mitigate the severity of

the sentence. He threatened the civil authorities with a heavy fine if the archbishop were found there after a given and brief period. And Athanasius sailed for the desert, exclaiming, "This is a little cloud ; it will soon pass over." Repenting that he had allowed him thus to escape his hands, Julian sent pursuers to seize him. Their boats pressed hard upon the bark containing the saint, who calmly bade his rowers to turn and row down the stream through the little fleet of pursuers. "Where is Athanasius?" they cried. "He has but lately passed up the river," was the true reply.

Julian affected to pity the fanatical Christians, who had forsaken the images which had fallen down from heaven to worship the symbol of a crucified malefactor, stigmatizing them by the epithet of "Galilæans."

He asserted that Pagans alone were entitled to his friendship, Christians simply to his justice. He deprived the Church of all the honours his predecessors had conferred upon her; transferred her revenues to the heathen temples; forbade testamentary donations; confounded the clergy with the lowest of the people; forbade Christians to teach grammar, or to impart the rudiments even of a liberal education; forbade the use of the classics, saying, "Christians might content themselves with Luke and Matthew, they had nothing to do with Homer or Demosthenes;" removed from practice the physicians and other professors of liberal arts; gave all the schools to heathen professors; excluded Christians from the army, and from civil offices; and deprived them of their wealth, that, as he said, "they might the more resemble their Master."

It seemed inevitable, under these regulations, that all learning must be banished from the Church; that her eloquent theologians must be succeeded by obscure fanatics, incapable of defending the truth of their own doctrines or of exposing the errors of Paganism. It *seemed* so indeed; but there was one mightier than Julian, against whom he had lifted up his sacrilegious hand.

The first ominous sign of failure merits our closest attention. It was his intention to rebuild the Temple at Jerusalem, with the express intention of demonstrating the falsity of the Divine predictions: and therefore he ordered his chosen friend, Alypius, to undertake the work in question, assisted by all that the governors of the East could achieve for the prosecution of the design. At the call of their great deliverer, the Jews hastened from all parts of the earth, and their insolent triumph alarmed the Christians of the Holy City. The men forgot their avarice, the women their luxury; spades and tools of silver were even provided, and the rubbish transplanted in cloaks of silk or purple. All that a mighty monarch could do, or the enthusiasm of a whole people effect, was there, yet the attempt singularly failed.

It is distinctly asserted, both by Christian and Pagan contemporary writers, that supernatural prodigies prevented the fulfilment of the design, and the evidence of Ammianus, the friend and biographer of Julian, shall be adduced as the most unquestionable, from his aversion to Christianity.

“Whilst Alypius, assisted by the governor of the province, urged with vigour and diligence the execution of

the work, horrible balls of fire, breaking out near the foundations with frequent and reiterated attacks, rendered the place, from time to time, inaccessible to the scorched and blasted workmen, and the victorious element continuing in this manner, obstinately bent, as it were, to drive them to a distance, the undertaking was abandoned."

Such authority, Gibbon admits, should satisfy a believing and astonish an incredulous mind, and the emperor might have read in the event the hopelessness of the whole achievement upon which his heart was so steadfastly set.

But his proceedings at Antioch were yet a further source of disappointment. This magnificent city, founded by the Antichrist of the Ancient Church, had been the birthplace of the name "Christian," and the populace, once fanatical in their hatred of the Christian religion, had, since the days of Constantine, become almost unanimous in their profession of the Faith they had once despised, although there is much reason to fear that they were better Christians in theory than in practice.

Only a few miles from the city rose the grove and temple of Daphne, the chosen shrine of Apollo, consecrated to scenes of unutterable licentiousness, the seat of a religion which deified the passions.

There, in former days, a revenue of thirty thousand pounds was yearly expended on the public sports, and the shady groves became the resort of innumerable pilgrims, who gave themselves up to such excesses of riot and debauchery, that the soldier and the philosopher alike shunned its enervating influences, and Pagan generals severely punished their subordinates who were seen there.

Yet the stern and cold Julian ignored the hideous corruption of the place, and gave notice of his intention to restore the worship of Apollo, inviting all who were faithful to the old religion to bring their offerings and meet him. His lively imagination painted in anticipation the victims, the processions, the incense, and the hecatombs of oxen, offered upon the smoking altars, amidst the rejoicings of thousands of ardent worshippers.

The appointed day arrived, the emperor approached the sacred spot, and found the concourse represented by one aged priest, and the victims by a solitary goose. One could almost pity his disappointment.

But this was not the worst. The sacred soil had been profaned by the burial of Babylas, the martyred Bishop of Antioch, who had fallen in the Decian persecution, and the translator of the sacred relics had been the emperor's own brother, the Cæsar Gallus.

Since this unhallowed intrusion into the realms of the Sun God, the oracle had ceased to speak, the Christians of a generation were buried around their bishop, and the flamens of a deserted fane had been crowded out.

Julian, in his indignation, disinterred the dead, but gave permission for the body of the saint to be decently interred elsewhere. It was, indeed, decently interred. While the Pagans were "purifying" the soil according to their ancient rites, an innumerable multitude of the people of Antioch placed the body of S. Babylas on a lofty car, and bore it to the city, while, with a sound like the roaring of the sea, the immense concourse chanted, with thundering acclamations, those psalms in which the Psalmist records the



folly of idols and idolaters. But this was not enough. In the night the Temple of Apollo was burnt down, the statue consumed, and the naked walls alone left. The Christians asserted that it was the lightning of an indignant God. Julian suspected a more earthly agency, and several of the clergy of Antioch were cruelly tortured.

The prefect Sallust, although he was a Pagan, strove earnestly to dissuade Julian from these severe measures, but was compelled himself to execute them. One of the first victims arrested was a young man named Theodore, who was cruelly stretched on the rack; but although his flesh was lacerated by sharp iron nails, he asked for no mercy, but seemed as if insensible to pain. Amidst the torments, he sang the same psalm he had joined in singing the day before, to show that he did not repent of the act for which he was condemned. "Confounded are all they that worship graven images and boast themselves in idols."

The prefect, struck with admiration of his fortitude, went to the emperor and told him that if he persisted in torturing these men they would gain glory, but he would gain ridicule, and Julian desisted.

It was thought at first that Theodore would die from the effects of the torture he had received; but God preserved the sufferer to old age. And Ruffinus states that he conversed with him years afterwards, and, enquiring of him whether he had not felt agonizing pains from the scourge and the rack, was assured that, after the first pangs, a young man seemed to stand by him, who wiped away the sweat of agony, and strengthened him with such heavenly consolation, that the season was rather one of rapture than of suffering.

At this time Persian ambassadors came to Antioch, offering peace on favourable conditions; but Julian, not knowing that he was rushing upon his fate, sternly replied, 'You need not trouble yourselves to send ambassadors so far; you will shortly see me in person.' We are, indeed, told that, having adopted certain opinions concerning the transmigration of souls, he fancied himself possessed by the soul of Alexander the Great, and destined to repeat the conquests of that hero.

About this time the Pagans took courage to renew their persecutions; for the season of moderation had almost reached its limit, and repeated disappointments had provoked them to fury.

The inhabitants of Gaza rose up against the Faithful, and put many to death with excruciating tortures; but when their fury was over they began to fear the vengeance of the law, which was, of course, at this period, a protection to the Christians; and the governor of the province threw several into prison to await their trial.

But when Julian heard of it, he commended the citizens and deposed the governor. "What right had he," said Julian, "to arrest the citizens merely for retaliating on a few Galilæans the insults and injuries offered by them to their gods?"

Gibbon especially records the case of Mark, Bishop of Arethusa, who had, as we have seen, protected Julian during the massacre in which his kinsfolk perished.

The magistrates demanded the full value of a temple which had been destroyed under his authority; but the brave old man would not give the smallest coin. Deter-

mined to break his spirit, they scourged him with great cruelty; and simply desiring to make him yield, promised him deliverance if he would only consent to give the slightest compensation. But as he still refused, they suspended his naked body, anointed with honey, to the rays of the Syrian sun and the stings of insects. From this lofty station the aged martyr gloried in his *crime*, and defied the utmost rage of his persecutors.

We are told that Julian, indeed, spared his life; "but posterity," says Gibbon, "will rather condemn the ingratitude than praise the clemency of the emperor."

At Meros, in Phrygia, three young men endured an agonizing martyrdom for a like offence. They had entered the temple by night and destroyed the idolatrous images. They might easily have remained hidden, but when others were suspected and arrested, they gave themselves up voluntarily.

They were offered pardon on condition of making a sacrifice of reparation to the idols; but steadfastly refusing, after enduring many ordinary tortures with patience, were extended upon a gridiron, beneath which a fire was kindled, and thus they were destroyed. But even in this extremity they gave the most heroic proofs of fortitude; thus, as Socrates tells us, addressing the ruthless governor: "If you wish to eat broiled flesh, Amachius, turn us on the other side also, lest we should appear but half-cooked to your taste." Still more frightful cruelties were inflicted upon the Christian virgins at Heliopolis, near Mount Libanus, and at Arethusa, in Syria, simply because of the resistance and opposition they had offered to the obscene customs of Pagan worship.

All these inflictions were contrary to the existing laws ; but Julian made no attempt to defend the sufferers ; telling those who reported the matter to him that it was the duty of Christians to suffer patiently, and not to seek revenge against their persecutors. Thus the fury and malice of the Pagans continued unchecked, and would probably soon have been legalized.

But the end was near : and Julian departed for the Persian war, amidst the universal expectation of both Christians and Pagans that, should he return successful, he would inaugurate a cruel persecution. He spent his leisure in composing a lengthened satire upon the Christian religion, some portions of which, as quotations, are found in the writings of the Fathers, like flies preserved in amber.

It is impossible to deny him the praise of military skill. Leaving Antioch, he travelled with rapidity to Beræa, Hierapolis, and Carrhæ, where he halted, for the twofold purpose of paying his devotions to the moon, and of settling the plans for the war, sharing his time between the great Temple dedicated to the luminary and the council-chamber. Dividing his troops, he descended the Euphrates with nearly seventy thousand men, pillaged and burnt the towns on its banks, crossed the country to the Tigris, and besieged Ctesiphon, sacrificing oxen to Mars, with such ill-success, that he punished the refractory god by calling Jove to witness that he would never sacrifice to Mars again.

But the other division of the forces which was to have joined them, with the Armenians as allies, did not appear ; and a false guide, sent by the Persians, enticed the

Romans into a desolate country on the east of the Tigris, where they suffered such distress that they were forced to commence their retreat.

In the neighbourhood of Maranga they were attacked by the foe, and had to fight with desperation all that day, from sunrise to sunset. A truce of three days was obtained to tend the wounded and bury the slain, Julian setting a noble example to his troops. The march was resumed, when, at midnight, on the 25th of June, as he was writing in his tent, he saw an apparition, which called itself the "Genius of the State." Once before it had appeared to him, in Gaul, the night before he was saluted emperor; and now he saw it retreating from the tent, the head dejected, and covered with a veil.

Julian rose, and made deprecatory offerings to the gods; but as he looked out he saw a meteor flash across the sky, and shuddered as he saw in it the threatened wrath of Mars, with whom he was on bad terms.

He called his haruspices, and they bade him avoid combat, and remain where he was for some hours. But he would not obey them. At daybreak they started, and were shortly attacked by the Persians. Julian was riding in front, unarmed, when he heard that the rear was attacked. Without staying to put on his corselet, he flew to the aid of his troops, and just as he stretched out his hand, to encourage his men, a spear entered beneath the outstretched arm. He tried to pull it out, but the sharp steel cut his fingers to the bone, and he fell from his horse.

They raised him tenderly, and bore him to the surgeons. When the pain was a little assuaged, he called for his

horse and arms, but had no strength to rise. Meanwhile the Persians were repulsed; but it became evident that the emperor was dying.

He conversed calmly with Maximus and Priscus, his chosen friends, on the nature of the disembodied spirit; bade his soldiers cease to weep, for he should soon be united with the stars; called for a draught of cold water, drank it, and calmly expired, in the second year of his reign, and the thirty-second of his age.

Well may the Christian pity this unhappy emperor, and render the tribute undoubtedly due to his natural virtues, his chastity, his courage, his abilities. We cannot forget the unfavourable light in which Christianity had presented itself to him; the unscrupulous Arians who had surrounded his cradle; the satire upon Christianity presented in the life of Constantius, the murderer of his kinsfolk.

At such a moment, it is not wonderful that many supernatural portents are reported to have foretold his fate, or revealed it to Christians separated by hundreds of leagues of barren desert, or other great physical barriers. The scoffing Libanus asked a Christian at Antioch, "What is the carpenter's son doing?" "He is making a coffin," was the reply.

But the most striking legend is thus related by Sozomen:—

"One of the friends of the emperor was travelling into Persia with the desire to join the expedition, when one night he found himself on a lonely road with no habitation near but a deserted church, into the which he entered and

slept. But in the night he saw in a vision all the Apostles and Prophets gathered together, complaining of the injuries Julian was inflicting upon the Church, and consulting upon the measures which should be adopted.

"Whereupon two individuals rose up in the midst of the assembly, and bade their brethren be of good cheer; for they would remove the oppressor. Whereupon they departed, and the vision ceased. He who saw this vision did not dare depart, but awaited its sequel in horrible suspense, so lifelike had it been, and such its effect upon him. So he laid himself down to sleep in the same place the next night, and again saw the same assembly, when the two who had departed the previous night returned and announced, 'Julian is dead!'"

This is but one amongst the many similar traditions of which it may serve as a specimen. They only show how thoroughly the minds of men must have been wrought upon by the critical state of affairs, by the calamities undoubtedly impending over the Church, and the consequent danger to the state. Had Julian returned triumphant from Persia, the failure of milder measures would probably have driven him to use the vast power at his command as Diocletian had used it, and the result must have been civil war; for the principle of non-resistance was no longer the moving principle of the Church. We need not heed the tradition which states that in his dying moments Julian cast his own blood into the air, crying out, "O Galilæan, Thou hast conquered!" The fact was self-evident, and probably suggested the legend.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### FROM THE DEATH OF JULIAN TO THE ACCESSION OF THEODOSIUS.

A.D. 363-378.

THE death of Julian occurred in a moment of extreme peril to the Roman army. Emboldened by the event, which could not long be concealed from them, the Persians renewed their attacks, and the state of the army became most critical.

A council was at once called, and attended by the chief officers of the army. A leader was necessary, and in this extremity they proclaimed Jovian emperor, a soldier alike distinguished by his birth and his courage. He had been a military tribune when Julian put forth the edict, giving his officers the option of resigning or sacrificing, and had at once laid down his commission. Such, however, was his value, that Julian would not accept his resignation, but continued him among the generals.

On being saluted emperor, he at first refused to accept the onerous dignity, and when the soldiers threatened violence, said that he did not wish to reign over idolaters. Immediately the hollowness of the restored Paganism was demonstrated, the soldiers cast down its emblems, and



declared that they were Christians, upon which Jovian allowed himself to be invested with the ensigns of authority.

His task, however, was an inglorious one. There was no safety but in submission; and although the ten thousand Greeks of Xenophon had accomplished their retreat from the same neighbourhood, yet *their* spirit was wanting in the degenerate Romans of the fourth century, and the Persians of Sapor differed widely from those of Artaxerxes.

Therefore, the soldiers being dispirited, provisions failing, and the foe increasing each hour, Jovian agreed to terminate the war on terms by no means honourable to the Roman name.

Sapor insisted on the absolute cession of the territory east of the Tigris, and of certain cities, including Nisibis, so often gallantly defended. A peace was concluded on these terms for thirty years, and hostages exchanged on each side.

Upon their retreat they encamped under the walls of Nisibis, which shame prevented Jovian from entering. Nothing could exceed the grief of its inhabitants at the cession of their city. Nearly all of them Christians, on whose behalf God had so recently, as they believed, manifested His power in the recent siege, they dreaded falling under the power of the fire-worshippers, whose savage persecution of Christianity was fresh in their memory. They even begged to be allowed to defend the city alone and unaided; but all was in vain, and orders were given that every citizen should be prepared to migrate in three days, unless willing to become the subject of Sapor. The other cities

being likewise surrendered, Jovian returned in peace towards Rome. On the march the Labarum was again displayed. By a circular epistle Jovian declared the Christian Faith to be the religion of the empire. The edicts of Julian were abolished, and all her legal immunities and possessions restored to the Church.

This circular was sent to the governors of all the provinces, and a large assemblage of Christian bishops, including Athanasius, gathered together at Antioch to greet Jovian on his return. He remained there six weeks.

The Pagans bewailed, as well they might, the death of Julian, and said that Christianity was, as of old, associated with the disgrace of the Roman arms; yet the remark was unjust, for the catastrophe which had befallen them was simply owing to the indiscretion of Julian, and had he survived he must have undergone the humiliation which fell to the lot of his successor. Jovian was, however, very far from being a persecutor, and calmed the fears of his Pagan subjects by an edict, extending toleration to all, whether Pagans, Arians, or Catholics.

But he was himself, not only a Christian, but a Catholic also, and he wrote to Athanasius in person, praising his devotion to the Lord and his brave contempt of danger. "Return to thy see," he ended; "be the pastor of God's people, and pray for us."

The rulers of the Church now resumed the discussion of doctrinal questions, which had been suspended by the common danger during the life of Julian, and a council was convened at Antioch, in Syria, which confirmed the decrees of Nicæa. The Anomæans, or extreme Arians,

refused to comply with these decrees, and Jovian was requested to banish them; but, faithful to his policy of toleration, he bluntly refused.

The Arians, who still followed Athanasius with unrelenting hostility, used every effort to get him expelled from his see, and one Lucius elected in his room. But when they came, according to their custom, to accuse him to Jovian, he asked their leader, Lucius, "How did you come to Antioch?" "By sea," was the reply; whereupon the emperor gave vent to an imprecation upon the sailors for not having thrown him overboard. It was not encouraging. From that period Jovian manifested very great friendship for Athanasius, and the Arians were forced to restrain their animosity for a season.

Immediately after these events, Jovian left Antioch and departed for Tarsus, in Cilicia, on his journey to Rome. There he duly performed the obsequies of the unhappy Julian, whose body had been conveyed thither from the distant scene of his death. This melancholy task concluded, he renewed his journey, and arrived at a place called Dardastana, situated on the frontiers of Bithynia. He retired to rest as usual, but was found dead in his chamber on the following morning. His death was attributed to various causes. The most probable is that he slept in a recently plastered room, in which a large fire of charcoal had been lighted to expel the damp. He was in the thirty-third year of his age, and had only reigned eight months, and his loss was justly regarded as a most grievous calamity to the empire, especially by Catholic Christians.

On the arrival of the troops at Nicæa, in Bithynia, they proclaimed Valentinian emperor.

He was a zealous Christian, who had not long returned from banishment; for he had grievously offended Julian by his open profession of Christianity, having struck a priest who sprinkled the lustral water over him while attending Julian to the gate of a temple, and even having torn away the portion of the robe on which the water had fallen. As soon as Jovian came to the throne, Valentinian was recalled from banishment to his accustomed post in the army; and now, by the unanimous voice of officers and soldiers, was saluted emperor. A greater proof could not be afforded of the hopelessness of the cause on which Julian had staked his all, than the successors chosen by his own army.

Shortly afterwards he divided the empire with his brother Valens. Valentinian took the Western portion with Rome, Valens the Eastern with Constantinople.

The character of Valentinian was very perplexing. He united the most opposite qualities.

So cruel was he sometimes, that even in ruling the royal household the expressions, "Burn him alive," "Beat him to death," "Strike off his head," were his common expletives; and, alas! they were not mere expletives, but were carried into effect, even for such trifling offences as a hasty word, or an involuntary delay. A poor boy who slipped a hound too hastily, an armourer who made a cuirass a few ounces too light, thus suffered. He also kept two bears, whom he called "Golden Grain" and "Innocence," to whom he gave malefactors, watching their last agonies

with calm satisfaction. So fond was he of these bears that he had their dens near his own bedchamber.

On the other hand, he issued most beneficent laws. He forbade the exposure of new-born infants; he established fourteen physicians, at the public expense, for the service of the poor of Rome, and established universities at that city and Constantinople. He was inclined to favour Catholic principles, but was impatient of religious discussions, and easily imposed upon by the pretended submission of certain Arians, so that Auxentius, although an Arian, kept the see of Milan, and Hilary was banished for opposing the imperial will in the matter.

Valens, on the other hand, was baptized by an Arian bishop, in 367, as he was setting out to oppose the Goths, and till his death patronized the heretics and persecuted the Catholics. He utterly lacked his brother's talents, but was, like him, capable of great cruelty.

After a civil war, in which he defeated a competitor for the empire, Procopius, the kinsman of Julian, Valens exercised cruelties proportioned to the fears he had manifested during the struggle; and when these political massacres ended, a most cruel inquisition into the reputed magical acts of the higher classes, both at Rome and at Antioch, was commenced. From the extremities of Europe and Asia the young or the aged were dragged in chains to one or the other of these cities. The nobility was decimated, the soldiers professed their numbers insufficient to guard the captives, who suffered the most cruel tortures and ignominious deaths.

Amongst the multitude of victims, young Chrysostom,

the future Bishop of Constantinople, and glory of the Eastern Church, narrowly escaped, because he had accidentally found one of the proscribed books.

Yet both princes retained the chaste and temperate simplicity which had adorned their private life, and under their reign the pleasures of the court cost the people neither a blush nor a sigh.

One of the saddest scenes in the early history of the Roman Church occurred about this time. Liberius, after many years of steadfast well-doing which succeeded his lapse and restoration, died in September, 366, one of his last actions having been the reception of a large body of the Eastern Church, who had renounced Arianism, into the unity of the Catholic Faith.

A struggle at once commenced for the vacant see. Damasus, a priest of the Church of S. Laurence, was consecrated by one party, and Ursinus by another, shortly afterwards. One month after the death of Liberius the party of Damasus besieged the church wherein his opponents were worshipping, accompanied by many adherents of the baser sort, who, improving the occasion, were guilty of a bloody massacre; so that, when the tumult subsided, one hundred and thirty-seven dead bodies were found in the basilica.

Each party endeavoured to throw the blame upon their opponents, although the spotless life and fervent charity which afterwards distinguished the successful candidate, Damasus, forbids us to suppose that he in any way sanctioned the sacrilegious massacre.

By this time, as we learn from the Pagan writer, Am-

riams, the episcopal dignity at Rome was one of such proud pre-eminence, that the Pagan prefect Prætextatus, addressing Damasus, exclaimed, "Make me Bishop of Rome, and I will at once turn Christian." Ammianus forcibly contrasts the pomp and luxury of the metropolitans, with the simplicity and self-denial of the rural prelates.

Up to this period the Church had rest from persecution but after Valens resigned his conscience to the keeping of his Arian advisers, he put forth an edict that all bishops expelled by Constantius and restored by Julian should be again banished. The Alexandrians said that the words could not refer to Athanasius, who had been excepted from the edict of Julian. Still the archbishop was forced to leave the episcopal palace, and confine himself for four months, when Valens yielded to the entreaties of the people; and thus terminated this last banishment of Athanasius. It was the *fifth* which he had endured.

But the work of this noble man was nearly over. After three or four years of peace, during which he was the very stay and support of the Faithful, under the blackening horizon, he departed in peace, May 2nd, 373, and he whom the storm of persecution had never shaken, but only proved, passed to the haven of eternal rest.

Scarcely has the episcopate ever possessed so noble a saint. Gibbon, the infidel historian, tells us that his labours and sufferings in defence of Catholic doctrine were the sole pleasure, business, duty, and glory of his life, and that he displayed a superiority of character and abilities which would have qualified him, far better than the

legenerate sons of Constantine, for the government of a great monarchy.

Inflamed from his youth with that love of Jesus Christ, which makes saints, from the day when he heard at Nicæa those doctrines from the lips of Arius which made his Lord a mere creature, he consecrated his whole energies in reparation to that Lord, adding to a profound knowledge and fiery eloquence all the strength of an iron will. This one object of his existence seemed lost when, after Ariminum, it might well be said, "*Athanasius contra mundum*;" but within a few years of his death the Nicene Faith was triumphant throughout the world.

But meanwhile Valens had inaugurated a very severe persecution. Eighty of the Catholic clergy who had sought his presence, to protest against the cruelties inflicted upon the Faithful at Constantinople, were compelled to embark on board a ship, which was then set on fire and deserted by her crew, so that they all perished in the flames. Many of the Faithful at Antioch were drowned in the Orontes, and the monks of Egypt invaded by a military force, by whose hands many of them suffered death.

Basil of Cæsarea was especially a mark for Arian animosity. Educated firstly at Cæsarea, then at Athens, in company with his beloved friend Gregory of Nazianzus, he was made bishop of the former city, after many years of diversified labour, A.D. 371.

The prefect Modestus, the minister of the cruelty of Valens, endeavoured to bend him to the emperor's will, but he amazed that subservient official by the boldness of his replies.



"Do you not fear what I can cause you to suffer?" asked the prefect. "Tell me what it is," was the reply. "Confiscation, exile, torture, death." "Find out some more potent menace," replied the saint. "Confiscation cannot touch a man who has no property; exile cannot touch him who regards the whole world as God's, and himself as a stranger and pilgrim; nor torture a feeble body which could but endure the first stroke; while death would be the gate of everlasting life."

The prefect reported the conversation to his master, who came to Caesarea, where he entered the Catholic church on the festival of the Epiphany. He found the church thronged, and the chant of the psalms pealed like thunder. The archbishop was standing as one rapt and absorbed, with the attendant ministers around. The unearthly grandeur of the service caused Valens to tremble. He presented his offering, no hand would receive it, nor was he allowed to communicate.

The impression was heightened by a subsequent conversation, and he left Basil unmolested in his see.

At Edessa the Catholics were deprived of their church, and forced to worship in the fields. Modestus menaced them with destruction, and they crowded thither in greater numbers.

He met a woman carrying her child to the scene, and asked her why she did so: "That he may share the crown of martyrdom with me," she replied. Modestus gave up the attempt to coerce them.

In the year 375, Valentinian died in a fit of passion as he was receiving some German ambassadors, who sued for

peace in the most humble terms, after an unsuccessful struggle. Giving full vent to his fury, he was reproaching them in the most opprobrious manner, when he burst a blood-vessel, and never spoke again.

During these sad times it pleased God to raise up defenders of the Faith, whose names have become household words to all succeeding generations, and who filled the place left vacant by the death of the great Athanasius.

*S. Martin*, Bishop of Tours, had already begun that course of missionary labours which has earned for him the title of the Apostle of Gaul. Originally a soldier, he renounced the military profession to follow Christ more perfectly. We are told that, while yet a catechumen, he cut his cloak in half to give to a poor beggar on a cold winter day, and was rewarded by a vision of the Lord in glory, wearing the cloak thus divided, and saying, "See this cloak, which Martin, yet a catechumen, hath given Me." Consecrated by the unanimous election of the people of Tours, in July, 372, he travelled as a missionary amongst the inhabitants of the forests, who were yet addicted to their Druidical superstitions, and accepted a challenge from certain Pagan priests to stake the truth of his mission upon a miracle. He stood beneath a sacred tree which overhung him, while they proceeded to cut it down, and the legend tells us, that as it gave way he made the sign of the cross, and the tree fell heavily on the other side.

Miracles without number, indeed, are imputed to him; so that, making allowance for all possible exaggeration, we

must still believe that very wonderful prodigies attended his heroic labours. At the close of the year, he was invited to visit the imperial court at Milan, where he was very graciously received by Valentinian.

Meanwhile sad affliction had fallen upon the deeply-tried Church of Alexandria.

Athanasius, dying, had recommended Peter, of Rome, as his successor, and he was accordingly elected and consecrated. But the Arians, accompanied by a multitude of Pagans, and headed by the prefect Palladius with a band of soldiers, attacked the church, and once more similar excesses to those of the days of Constantius were enacted. The Pagans gave full vent to their hatred of Christianity. They shouted Pagan hymns, delivered a discourse in favour of vice from the pulpit, and a shameless wretch, in woman's attire, sat on the altar, where, says Peter, we invoke the Holy Spirit.

The tyrant Valens, sanctioning all these iniquities, sent the Arian, Lucius, to fill the episcopal throne, and he was received with eager welcome by the Pagans. "Welcome," they cried, "thou who deniest the Son. Serapis loves thee, and hast brought thee hither." Such was the alliance between Arianism and Paganism.

Many of the Faithful were put to death in the cruel persecution that followed: many more, even children, grievously tortured. Peter escaped to Rome, and was received with open arms by Damasus; for there was safety in the dominions of Valentinian.

The Arian heresy was now at its height. Ulphilas, the great apostle of the Goths, whose labours had converted

numbers of those barbarians, visiting Valens to seek aid against a heathen oppressor, was unhappily induced to adopt the emperor's religion, and his converts followed him. The results were most momentous, and affected Christianity for generations; for the Goths were the future conquerors of Rome.

We have already mentioned that one Auxentius, an Arian, signing the creed of Ariminum, was allowed to retain the important see of Milan. At his death, the Emperor Valentinian left the choice of his successor to the people, and in the midst of a doubtful contest between Catholics and Arians, the governor of Liguria, Ambrose, made an earnest appeal to them to preserve the peace.

Suddenly a little child cried out, "Let Ambrose be bishop," and, as if the words were inspired, the whole multitude took up the cry.

In spite of his obvious reluctance, he was literally seized by the people, although unbaptized, drawn from a place of concealment to which he fled for refuge, and only allowed to stipulate that he should receive Baptism from a Catholic.

On the eighth day after his baptism he was consecrated to this important see, being then thirty-four years of age. The general enthusiasm was ascribed to Divine intervention, and allowed to supply all the canonical defects in this hasty proceeding; and certainly the future justified the choice. For the present the new bishop committed himself with unremitting diligence to the study of theology. He was consecrated December 7th, 374.

About the same time, S. Jerome, whose name is indelibly

associated with the history of the time, first came into notoriety.

He was a Dalmatian, who in early youth had sought Rome for the study of the law. In his youth he had been given greatly to dissipation. But he tells us that he was not left long without serious impressions; particularly he remembers visiting the tombs of the martyrs in the catacombs upon the Sundays, and the effect produced upon him by the awful gloom of those scenes, where the assemblies of the Church had once been held, in startling contrast to the gorgeous churches with which the piety of the Christianity of his day honoured the Lord.

Here he was baptized, and became a most enthusiastic Catholic. After visiting Treves and Aquileia, he withdrew to Antioch, where he was still pursuing his classical studies, when he had a very severe illness, during which he fell into a kind of trance.

He supposed himself in the presence of his Judge, when, being asked concerning his faith, he replied that he was a Christian. "Thou liest!" was the reply. "Where the treasure is, there will the heart be also. Thou art a Ciceronian." At his earnest entreaty, he dreamt that he was spared, and permitted to return to the world. On his recovery he utterly abjured secular studies, and fled to the deserts, where in solitude and silence he laid the foundation of the wondrous learning for which he was afterwards so distinguished. This was in the year 374.

Valentinian was succeeded in the East by his son Gratian, a promising youth then in his seventeenth year, who by the advice, or perhaps compulsion, of his minister,

Merobandes, a Frank, was led to associate his young half-brother Valentinian, then only in his fourth year, as a partner in the empire.

Valens continued to reign alone in the East, and still continued to persecute the Catholics, when a fearful calamity befell the Eastern empire. The Goths had been living peaceably enough in their settlements to the north and east of Dacia, when a mighty swarm of hideous barbarians appeared on their outskirts, known to posterity as the Huns. The physical qualities of these repulsive beings, their extreme ugliness, the breadth between their eyes, and other qualities, indicated their origin from a totally different family of the human race. Indeed, they belonged to those Tartar tribes who occupied the whole extent of Northern Asia, pressing upon the Chinese empire in the East, and now in their restless migrations pressing towards the far different civilization of Rome.

The Goths suffered such fearful defeats from these evil beings, that they begged the Roman authorities for shelter south of the Danube, and upon very humiliating conditions, two hundred thousand of them were suffered to enter the Roman territory as fugitives. But instead of conciliating their guests so as to utilize their valour in the defence of the empire, the Roman authorities treated them with such vile inhumanity, that, after selling their own flesh and blood, their sons and daughters, for such food as the carcasses of dogs, they took up arms to supply the very necessities of nature.

A terrible struggle ensued. The men who might have formed a bulwark for Rome against the Huns became her

deadliest foes; and finally the whole force of the Eastern empire was arrayed against them in battle, near Adrianople, on August the 9th, A.D. 378. Gratian had been summoned to his uncle's assistance, and was advancing with the forces of the West; but, hoping to have all the glory to himself, the ill-advised Valens joined battle before his arrival. A fearful defeat, such as Rome had not known since Cannæ, ensued. Valens was severely wounded, and his eunuchs conveyed him to a cottage in the neighbourhood to dress his wounds. While thus engaged the Goths surrounded the cottage, and being unable to force the doors, heaped combustible materials around it, and burned the house and all within it, save one soldier, who leaped out of a window, and survived to tell the painful story.

Such was his fate, in the fiftieth year of his age, and the fourteenth of his reign. Almost the only vice he had was cruelty; and his tragical death did not fail to recall to the minds of the Catholics the fate of the eighty clergy who perished in the burning ship.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### FROM THE ACCESSION OF THEODOSIUS TO THE CONVERSION OF S. AUGUSTINE.

A.D. 379-387.

THE fate of the unhappy Valens left the whole burden of government upon the youthful Gratian, only yet in his twenty-second year. Shrinking from the responsibility of empire in so great a crisis, he looked around him for a colleague with whom he could share the burden, for his brother, Valentinian, was still only nine years of age, and found one in the great Theodosius, whose father, a noble general, had been rewarded with death for the deliverance of Britain and of Africa from the barbarians.

The choice was alike honourable to Gratian and to Theodosius; for it was under the nominal authority of the former that the elder Theodosius had suffered. Theodosius the younger was now in his thirty-third year, possessing manly resolution and dignity. The qualities of his heart were not unworthy of his personal bearing, which greatly impressed the beholder.

Since the death of his father he had spent his time in the cultivation of his personal estate in Spain, whence,



like Cincinnatus of old, he was summoned for the preservation of the state. His country was in danger, and he relinquished all his natural animosities against the authorities under whom his father had perished, and joined Gratian in the city of Surmium, where he was invested with the imperial dignity, January 19th, A.D. 379.

Never was an honour less solicited or more nobly borne. Under his reign Rome was still the imperial city of the world, and the empire was united under a single head for the last time. The last Roman emperor worthy of the name was also the hero under whom Paganism was finally abolished in the state, and Catholic Christianity attained its final triumph.

Constantine, of necessity, had left the ancient system of the state still flourishing, although he issued edicts against heathen sacrifices.

Constantius had taken yet more decisive measures; but Julian had abolished the enactments against Paganism, and Jovian and Valentinian had simply tolerated all parties. Theodosius and Gratian were far more zealous in their profession of Christianity; and believing that the heathen worship was indeed the worship of demons, they felt that they had no choice but to treat its exercise as an offence against God and man.

Therefore Gratian, at his accession, refused the title and insignia of Pontifex Maximus, which all his predecessors had accepted as a mere matter of form, while he seized on all the revenues of the Pagan temples for the use of Church or state, and abolished all the privileges of the heathen priesthood. The Pagan party was still strong in

Rome, and the altar of victory, which stood in the senate house, once removed by Constantine, but restored by Julian, became the bone of contention. Gratian ordered it to be removed. Symmachus, the prefect of the city, a renowned Pagan orator, pleaded that it might be allowed to remain; but Ambrose, of Milan, supported by all the Christian members of the senate, opposed the prayer, and prevailed. When Theodosius visited Rome at a later date, he openly called upon the senate to choose between God and Baal, and the majority, in the absence of Symmachus, who had been exiled for his conspicuous Paganism, declared themselves Christians. The effect was soon perceived; temples were deserted or transformed into churches, and the religion which had been triumphant in Rome for twelve centuries ceased for ever. In the provinces, many holy bishops, like S. Martin, headed crusades for the destruction of the heathen temples. This was not always achieved without danger; for the inhabitants were frequently zealous in the defence of their temples. In the year 385, Marcellus, Bishop of Apamea, set out with an armed troop to destroy a temple at a place in his diocese, called Auton. Being lame, he remained at some distance while his followers were destroying the temple, when a party of enraged peasants seized him and burnt him to death on the spot. The council of the province, accounting him a martyr, would not suffer his death to be avenged. Although we may regret the loss of such monuments of classic beauty as those ancient temples, yet the impurities and iniquities of which they had been the scenes must have fully justified the measure. We may now gaze

with poetical regret at ruined shaft or column; for Paganism is but a remembrance, a dream of the past; but when it was a living power, no such truce could be made with it. The Christian student may now study the heathen mythology with impunity, as one might, with equal impunity, handle the dead body of a venomous serpent. While it was yet living the case was different. Hence it seems most unreasonable to deplore the "Vandalism" of our predecessors of that age.

At this period all the churches of the East, with the exception of Jerusalem, were in the hands of the Arians. The Macedonians, who differed but little in opinion from those who maintained the doctrines of Nicæa, held intercourse and communion with them in all the cities. But an enactment of Gratian permitted to each sect the exercise of its own form of religion; and the Macedonians, retaking the churches from which Valens had expelled them, began to separate themselves from the Catholics; but some, indeed, condemning this schismatic spirit, united themselves more closely with the orthodox than ever.

All the bishops banished by Valens were now recalled. Meletius accordingly returned to Antioch, where Paulinus, his successor, governed the see. There was every prospect of a schism, when Flavian, afterwards bishop, suggested that Paulinus should hold it for life, and Meletius, if the survivor, succeed him, whereupon Meletius retired to Constantinople.

The principal bishops at this period deserve mention. Damasus, who had succeeded Liberius, presided over the see of Rome. Alexandria owned a divided authority; for

while the Catholics gave their allegiance to Timothy, who had succeeded Peter, the Arians gave theirs to Lucius, the former enemy and rival of S. Athanasius. Constantinople was yet under the rule of the Arian prelate Demophilus; but his rule was drawing to an end.

In the year 379, the great S. Basil, Bishop of Cæsarea, and, after S. Athanasius, the most valiant champion of the Nicene Faith, departed to his rest. Born about the year 329, he had been the schoolfellow of S. Gregory of Nazianzus, at Cæsarea, and afterwards his fellow-student at Athens, where they were the pupils of the most celebrated sophists of the age. There they were thrown into contact with Julian, afterwards the apostate, who, being about their own age, was likewise pursuing his studies at Athens, and alas! gradually falling away from the truth, even as his two fellow-students grew in the knowledge and love of the Faith; for he had already been initiated into the heathen mysteries by Maximus at Ephesus.

S. Gregory asserts that he often saw cause to suspect what a scourge the empire was nourishing in its bosom. The friendship between Basil and Gregory was very remarkable. "We had both the same object," says Gregory in after years; "we were seeking the same treasure. We resolved to make our friendship everlasting by seeking the same blissful eternity. We watched over each other, and mutually exhorted each other to perseverance. We held no intercourse with those of our fellow-students whose lives were evil; only with those who, by their modesty and wisdom, set us a good example. We knew but two roads—the one to the church, the other

to the schools. As for those which led to the theatre, or vain amusements, we knew them not."

It is sad that so holy a friendship should at length have been broken. When Basil became Archbishop of Cæsarea, he selected from the one hundred and fifty sees under his charge the miserable frontier-town of Sasima—a place on the junction of great roads, daily disturbed by the brawls of carriers—for the fitting abode of his friend, and almost compelled him to accept the episcopal charge of the place. Gregory could not content himself there, but, after his consecration, first retired to Nazianzus to assist his father, who was bishop of that city, and then, being invited by the suffering remnant of the Catholics in Constantinople, who had groaned under Arian oppression ever since the appointment of Macedonius, in the year 340, he came thither as a missionary bishop. The place had now been the head-quarters of Arianism for nearly forty years. In 379, Catholic services were commenced in the Church of the Anastasia, or Resurrection—name of happiest omen. It was simply a house metamorphosed into a church. Daily services and eloquent preaching attracted the citizens; and the Arians, conscious of the badness of their cause, commenced persecution, pelting the bishop with stones, and sending crowds of the lowest of the people to profane the church and disturb its services. Still Gregory persevered. S. Jerome came to his assistance, and, in the midst of all opposition, the word of God grew mightily, and prevailed.

But Arianism, which had grown like a rank weed under imperial support, suddenly lost its accustomed nutriment

In the year 380, Theodosius received Holy Baptism from the Catholic Bishop of Thessalonica, and thenceforth threw himself heart and soul into the cause. He issued an edict to his subjects, recommending to them the Catholic Faith as delivered by the Apostles, and then professed at Rome and Alexandria, which recognized the Godhead of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit of co-equal majesty.

In November, Theodosius came to Constantinople, where he requested the Arian Bishop to subscribe the Nicene Creed, and thereby unite the people. He refused to obey, and therefore received an imperial command to surrender the churches to the Catholics. It seemed a hard measure, yet it was but that which the Arians had ever meted to their opponents; as, for example, at Alexandria, under the infamous opponents of Athanasius—Gregory and George of Cappadocia. The Arians now took their turn to worship outside the city, as they had so often compelled the Catholics to do; while the emperor, sending for Gregory, warmly embraced him, and proceeded to put him in possession of S. Sophia, in spite of the ferocious opposition of the Arian populace.

So the aged bishop, worn with sickness, was led, amidst the loud Hosannahs of the Catholics, to his place in the sanctuary of the cathedral, while the Faithful called for his immediate enthronisation as Bishop of Constantinople.

But the meekness and love of Gregory did far more to win the Arians back to the truth than the imperial power. He went quietly on his way, visiting the sick, comforting the afflicted, preaching, baptizing, confirming, until his health gave way.

The Faithful thronged around his sick-bed, and amongst them stood a young man with haggard face, whose voice was choked with sobs as he confessed that he had been employed to murder Gregory. "God be gracious to you, my son," was the reply. "The only reparation that I ask is, that you give yourself up to Him."

Meanwhile the emperor went on his course, and by a second edict forbade the Arians to hold their services within the walls of the cities, gave back all the sacred buildings to the Catholics, and asserted that that title belonged exclusively to believers in the Holy Trinity.

And now he resolved to summon a council at Constantinople, in order to counteract the heresy of Macedonius, the late Bishop of Constantinople. The Arians at this date had divided into two great parties, the Eunomians, who had even enlarged on the heresies of Arius, and the Eusebians, or semi-Arians, who, professing a modified Arianism, were especially heretical on the Divinity of the Holy Spirit. They were called Macedonians after their late leader, and were especially powerful in Constantinople, Thrace, and Bithynia.

About a hundred and fifty bishops assembled, under the presidency of Meletius of Antioch. They were all of the Eastern Church, because the emperor had only summoned such as were subject to him, and because the heresies they were called to suppress had their seat chiefly in the East.

It does not seem that Damasus, or any of the Western Bishops, were represented; nevertheless it is accounted the *Second Œcumenical Council*, since its decrees were received by the West as orthodox.

The first act of the council was to settle the question concerning the Bishop of Constantinople. Peter of Alexandria had, some time previously, consecrated one Maximus to the see, on the plea that the canons forbade the translation of Gregory from the see of Nazianzus to another bishopric. This objection was overruled, and Gregory was declared the rightful bishop of the Eastern city.

Meletius died at Constantinople during the progress of the council, and they bore his body in procession all the long distance from that city to Antioch, funeral honours being rendered him in each city, lights borne before him, and psalms and hymns sung almost continuously, until he rested beside his martyred predecessor, S. Babylas. All the bishops of the council, known as orators, made funeral orations, of which only that of S. Gregory of Nyssa remains.

In spite of the agreement previously made at Antioch, the bishops at Constantinople appointed Flavian to succeed Meletius, Paulinus being yet alive. S. Gregory Nazianzen could not give his sanction to this aggression, and many disputes arose, which intensified the desire he had formerly conceived to leave the city and seek a less responsible post. He felt his work was done. Weak and feeble, he had yet seen the Catholics triumphant, and the Arians overthrown. He had sown the seed, others might reap the harvest. His objections were strengthened by the opposition Timothy of Alexandria and other bishops made to the circumstances of his appointment, and after delivering a touching farewell discourse he quitted the city, leaving behind him a well-organized Catholic Church and



a faithful flock, who surrendered his loving care with sad reluctance.

In his place, Nectarius was appointed, a well-born and courtly prelate, who possessed gentleness and dignity, which were his greatest qualifications for the important post he was called upon to fill. Possibly the great bulk of the people desired little more. Arianism had greatly diminished their Christian zeal, and the position of the patriarch was one of secular as well as of Christian dignity.

Nectarius was not even baptized at the time of his nomination, and after receiving that Sacrament he had to be instructed in his episcopal duties, which office fell to Cyriacus, bishop of a town in Cilicia. A conversation which is recorded between Nectarius and one Martyrius, whom he wished to ordain deacon, curiously illustrates the feeling of the age on this and kindred subjects.

"I am unworthy to be ordained deacon," said Martyrius, "and you know how dissolute my life has been." "And I," replied Nectarius, "who am now a bishop, was not my life even worse than yours? You are my witness, who assisted me in my irregularities." "But you," replied Martyrius, "have but just been baptized, and have moreover received the sacerdotal gift; so that you are as innocent as a newborn babe. On the contrary, I received Baptism long since, and have yet continued to live as if unbaptized." And he refused to be ordained. It is easy to perceive the motive which led people to defer their baptism, mistaken although it was.

Thirty-six Macedonian bishops had been admitted to the council, in the hope that they and their followers

might be reconciled to the Church; but the hope proved a vain one. They ended by declaring that they preferred the doctrines of Arius to those of Nicæa, and then withdrawing from the council, rendered the breach wider than ever.

The council, proceeding to the definition of doctrine, added the latter portion to the Nicene Creed, beginning at the words, "And I believe in the Holy Ghost," slightly modifying the phraseology of the earlier portion. It is the creed in its latest form, properly called the Creed of Constantinople, which is used in the Eucharistic service of the Church.

It was decreed also in this council that the Bishops of Constantinople should have precedence next after those of Rome, since Constantinople was a New Rome. This is the most remarkable canon of the whole council, and probably indicates the true cause of the primacy conceded to Rome, although the Roman Bishops appear to have attributed their privileges to the establishment of the see by S. Peter, even in the earliest times.

The bishops, before separating, sent a copy of the seven canons they had passed to Theodosius, and then separated. Four presidents had presided in turn—Meletius, who vacated his seat by death; Gregory of Nazianzus, by the resignation of his see; Timotheus of Alexandria; and, after the passing of the new canon, Nectarius of Constantinople.

Following up the decrees of the council, the emperor made several severe laws against the heretics, to which he was persuaded by Amphilochius, Bishop of Iconium.

This aged prelate came to court with certain other bishops, and after paying the usual homage to the emperor, with every appearance of respect, studiously neglected his son, the young Arcadius, who sat near his father; whereupon Theodosius, thinking him unmindful, reminded him to salute his son. Amphilochius did so, with such undue familiarity that the offended emperor ordered him to be driven from his presence; but as the guards were thrusting him forth, the old man turned round, and cried in a loud voice, "So doth God abhor those who refuse to pay the same honour to His Son as to Himself." The emperor immediately called Amphilochius back, asked his forgiveness, and thereupon passed a law forbidding the Arians to assemble for public worship.

The success of Theodosius was not less manifest in secular than in spiritual affairs. Resigning the intention of conquering the Goths, he succeeded in reconciling them to the Roman rule, and within four years from the battle of Adrianople the ferocious invaders had become peaceful citizens of the empire, forming a bulwark against other invaders, and cultivating the land they had once depopulated.

But a dark cloud came over the brightness of the scene. Maximus raised the standard of revolt in Britain, and, passing into Gaul, compelled Gratian, who was then at Paris, to seek refuge in flight. He reached Lyons in safety, and would have made good his retreat into Italy, but for the treachery of the governor, who detained him by delusive promises till his pursuers arrived, and, assured of their arrival, delivered the youthful monarch, as he

rose from supper, into the hands of the assassins, who murdered him, while with his dying breath the ill-fated youth murmured the name of S. Ambrose, to whom he was most deeply attached. This sad event occurred on the 25th of August, A.D. 383.

Theodosius was unable, for the present, to avenge the death of his colleague and friend, whose fate Maximus affected to regret, and was compelled to leave the usurper in temporary possession of Britain, Spain, and Gaul, stipulating, however, for the safety and integrity of the dominion of Valentinian in Italy.

The first instance of the punishment of heresy by death took place under Maximus, in Gaul.

One Priscillian, a Spaniard of great wealth and learning, had combined the most objectionable portions of many heresies into one yet more objectionable heresy, which he inculcated in Spain and Gaul.

Like the Manichæans, he appears to have held the dualistic principle of two co-eternal beings—the one good, the other evil; and he is charged, like many other heresiarchs, with practices of the foulest impurity, although his public teaching commended the strictest ascetism.

After traversing Spain and Italy, he and his companions were brought to trial at Treves, in Gaul, before a secular court, when S. Martin begged so earnestly that they might not be tried for spiritual offences before secular judges, that the trial was suspended till he had left Treves; but no sooner had he departed, satisfied by the promise of Maximus that their lives should be safe, than the promise was broken, the heretics were brought to trial, condemned

to the torture, when they confessed impure doctrines and practices, for which Priscillian and six of his companions were condemned to death, and were immediately beheaded.

So indignant was S. Martin, that he refused to communicate with the bishops who had sanctioned the execution, and he persevered in his resolution in spite of the threats and entreaties of Maximus. Shortly afterwards some officers of Gratian were condemned to die. S. Martin pleaded most earnestly for their lives, and Maximus, taking advantage of his distress, consented to spare them, on condition that S. Martin should communicate with the persecutors.

S. Martin, thus embarrassed, yielded, and saved the destined victims, at what appeared to him a sacrifice of principle, after which he joined the Ithacians, as the persecutors were called from their leader Ithacius, in the consecration of a Bishop of Treves. He returned home in great sadness, uncertain whether he had acted rightly in condoning the sin of the persecutors, even in order to save the lives of the innocent. The reader will acquit him more easily than he acquitted himself.

Upon the death of Gratian the hopes of the Pagans revived, and Symmachus, their leader, addressed a petition to Valentinian, in the name of the senate, beseeching that the privileges and revenues of which they had been deprived might be restored to them. Using all the artifices of rhetoric, he represented Rome as praying that she might be allowed to retain the religion under whose blessing her wide dominion and her many past glories had been gained,

and that she might not be forced to change her religion in her old age. He pretended, somewhat weakly, that it was but one and the same Deity, Whom Pagans and Christians adored under different appellations. In conclusion, he depicted the poverty to which the temples were reduced. He endeavoured to touch the feelings of generosity by an appeal to the mercy of the emperors, and painted, in doleful colours, the calamities which had followed the decay of the ancient religion.

But all this was rendered useless. S. Ambrose heard of the memorial, and addressed a counter memorial in such vigorous terms, that he completely upset the empty rhetoric of Symmachus.

He pointed out the calamities which had happened under the Pagan regime, and refuted the notion that the present misfortunes were owing to the decay of Paganism. He told Valentinian, that if Pagan worship were restored by his authority, he would be simply worshipping the idols by proxy, and that those who advised such concessions, if Christians in name, were really Pagans. He pointed out, that a religion must be weak which could not, as Symmachus pretended, subsist without its revenues, contrasting such a faith with that Christianity which had grown under persecution, and finally threatened that, if Valentinian conceded the point to Symmachus, he (Valentinian) might come to church indeed, but would not be received as a Christian, and his offerings would be rejected. It is needless to add that Ambrose prevailed. The day of Paganism had gone for ever, and the memory of the cruelties once exercised in her name, deprived her of all the

sympathy which might otherwise have been shown in her dying struggles.

In the year 382, S. Jerome became ecclesiastical secretary to Pope Damasus, and remained at Rome several years. He gained a great influence over many Roman ladies of rank and title, which, however, he used in such a way as to render himself generally unpopular both with clergy and laity. He endeavoured to persuade all women under his influence to embrace the monastic state of virginity, and inculcated habits of asceticism to such a degree, that some of his female followers killed themselves by protracted fasting. The praises he bestowed upon the celibate life appear to us to be very exaggerated, magnifying it, as he does, as the very highest effort of human sanctity.

In addition to this, the roughness and bitterness of speech in which he indulged, the open scorn he manifested for the Roman clergy, did great harm, and raised him many adversaries; so that at the death of Damasus he quitted Rome for Antioch, saying he had been a fool to think he could sing the Lord's song in a strange land.

In the year 385, he left Antioch to visit Jerusalem, and, after a tour amongst the Egyptian monasteries, settled at Bethlehem, where Paula, a Roman lady who had embraced the monastic state, followed him. She had recently lost her daughter Blesella, who had doubtless hastened her end by the austerities in which she seemed even to eclipse her mother, and as the mother fainted at her daughter's tomb, the people cried out, "See how she weeps for the child whom she killed by fasting." Now, detached from all worldly ties, she took up her final

abode near her spiritual adviser at Bethlehem, where they rivalled each other in ascetic virtues.

The Empress Justina, mother of the young emperor Valentinian II., was a zealous Arian. Entertaining exaggerated ideas of the prerogatives of her son, she requested S. Ambrose, in his name, to yield a church in Milan for the purposes of Arian worship. Refusing to hold any conference with her agents, S. Ambrose declared, with modest firmness, that he would rather die the death of a martyr than be guilty of the sacrilege of yielding the temple of God to those who denied the Divinity of the Son.

This refusal appeared to Justina an act of rebellion and insolence, and she hastily determined to exert the imperial power to its fullest extent, rather than yield what she considered the just exercise of her prerogative. As she desired to perform her devotions in public at Milan during the ensuing Easter, she had no time to lose, and S. Ambrose was summoned before the council. He obeyed as a faithful subject; but was followed, against his will, by an innumerable multitude of the Faithful, anxious for his safety. They pressed with loud clamours around the palace, and their demeanour appeared so threatening, that the affrighted councillors, instead of punishing the archbishop, besought him to secure their own safety, to protect the person of the young Valentinian, and to restore peace to the city. He complied, and all was well till the Holy Week, when the attempt to obtain a church for Arian worship was renewed. First they sought to seize the Portian Basilica; but S. Ambrose took up his residence therein, and they could not dislodge him. Then they



erected the imperial "pew" in the new Basilica, with its purple hangings; but the multitude strove to tear them down, and they sent for the Gothic body-guard of the emperor. The Goths, as they came, were met by the archbishop, who, menacing them with excommunication, enquired whether it was to invade the house of God that they had taken service under the government.

The hesitation of the barbarians showed Justina the danger of her position, and she was persuaded by the wisest of her ministers to dissemble her desire for revenge; while her son exclaimed that his own servants were ready to betray him into the hands of an insolent priest.

The laws of the empire still condemned the Arian heresy, and hence the resistance of the Catholics seemed justified, or at least excused. But by the influence of Justina, an edict of toleration was promulgated in all the western provinces in favour of Arianism.

Benevolus, the secretary of state, refused to draw up the law, and was deprived of his post. It was nevertheless published, granting free liberty to *all* who signed the Creed of Ariminum of meeting for public worship; and it denounced the punishment of death to all who should attempt, openly or in private, to make any resistance to the decree.

The character and language of S. Ambrose evidently pointed him out as the object of this decree, which he speedily transgressed. A sentence of banishment was pronounced, which permitted him to choose his place of exile; for his foes were evidently afraid of proceeding to extremities against him,

He boldly refused to obey, and his people supported him in his heroic disobedience. They guarded his person by turns, the gates of the cathedral and his residence were strongly secured, and the troops were unwilling to act against the archbishop. The poor of his flock were enthusiastic in his cause. They crowded the churches in multitudes, and spent days and nights in devotion.

It was at this time that the custom first began of chanting hymns and psalms antiphonally (from side to side) in the church of Milan during the watches of the night and the daily hours of public prayer, and the custom spread from Milan throughout the churches of the West. "How did I weep," says S. Augustine, who was present, "in Thy hymns and canticles, touched to the quick by the voices of Thy sweet attuned Church: the voices flowed into mine ears, and the truth distilled into my heart."

The churches were too small for the vast congregations of this great religious revival, and S. Ambrose was desired to sanction the erection of another church. He complied, upon the condition that the relics of martyrs should be found and buried beneath the altar—a custom deriving its origin from the catacombs. Inspired by a dream, he bid them dig in a certain spot, whereupon they found the relics of two martyrs, Gervasius and Protasius, which had remained hidden so many years "that they might at length be produced to repress the fury of an empress."

The sequel shall be told in the words of S. Augustine, then a professor of rhetoric in Milan.\* "For when they were discovered and dug up, and, with due honour, trans-

\* S. Aug. Conf. Pusey's translation, b. ix. c. x.

lated to the Ambrosian Basilica, not only they who were vexed with unclean spirits, the devils confessing themselves, were cured, but a certain man, who had for many years been blind, a citizen, and well known to the city, asking and hearing the reason of the people's confused joy, sprang forth, desiring his guide to lead him thither. Led thither, he begged to be allowed to touch with his handkerchief the bier of Thy saints whose death is precious in Thy sight; which, when he had done, and put to his eyes, they were forthwith opened." After the holy relics were brought to the Basilica Ambrosiana, S. Ambrose returned thanks to God, Who had given such relief to His church, and declared that he needed no other defence. "Let us bring these victorious victims," he said, "to the spot whereon is Christ the Sacrifice. But He Who hath suffered for all upon the altar, they whom He hath purchased by His Passion beneath it. It is the place I had designed for myself; for it is fitting that the priest should repose where he has been accustomed to offer, but I yield it to these sacred victims." The spot is still shown: his body now lies there with the martyrs.

This miracle, which happened before a vast multitude of people, caused an indescribable enthusiasm on the part of the Catholics, and although the Arians endeavoured to throw doubt and ridicule upon it, they were grievously discouraged, and the empress herself paused in her fury. The feeble Valentinian found himself unable to contend with one so manifestly favoured by heaven. The disinterested advice of Theodosius induced him to submit with patience, and shortly afterwards he fell

completely under the influence of the bishop he had persecuted, and the holy Faith he had been taught to despise.

These events had a powerful influence upon the mind of S. Augustine, afterwards the greatest philosopher and most voluminous writer amongst the Fathers, and were instrumental in hastening his conversion; but the subject is of such importance, owing to the influence exercised by his writings upon the future of the Church, that we shall give a retrospective view of his life previous to the period at which we have now arrived. The subject demands another chapter.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### FROM THE CONVERSION OF S. AUGUSTINE TO THE DEATH OF THEODOSIUS.

A.D. 387-397.

S. AUGUSTINE, whose writings have influenced the Christian Church more than those of any other uninspired writer, was born in the year 354, during the reign of the Emperor Constantius, at Thagaste, an episcopal city of Numidia. His mother, Monica, was a zealous Catholic, his father, Patricius, yet a heathen. From his birth he was the object of his mother's fervent prayers; but the general feeling in those days, that it was better to defer Baptism until the temptations of youth had passed away, lest its follies should become more dangerous through the abuse of Baptismal grace, caused his Baptism to be indefinitely postponed, although during a dangerous illness in his childhood he was once on the point of receiving that holy Sacrament.

He has left us, in his "Confessions," full and interesting details of his youth, from which we learn that he was exceedingly wild and headstrong from an early age, and readily followed his schoolfellows and companions in their follies and vices, so that he cost his mother many bitter tears. He tells us that his love of legendary lore caused him

to be enraptured by the fictitious stories of the classical authors, such as those of Virgil. Therefore he made great progress in the works of the great poets (and philosophers) who had written in his mother tongue, Latin; and he wept copiously, as he tells us, over the sufferings of the unhappy Dido, while he knew not, as he says, his own unhappy state as a wanderer from God. The like stories, in the Greek, had little attraction for him, owing to the difficulty of a foreign tongue, to which he gave little application, a misfortune which he afterwards bitterly regretted, since the theological writings of the Eastern Church, and the very Gospels themselves, in their original tongue, were strange to him.

When he had attained his eighteenth year, he left the school of his native town to pursue his studies at Carthage, where all the advantages of a university might be obtained. But amidst the temptations of this gay and dissolute city he went further and further astray, and became the father of an illegitimate son, to whom he gave the name Adeodatus.

At this time he was summoned to his father's deathbed. Patricius died in the full assurance of Christian hope, converted by the loving prayers of his wife, the mourning, yet happy, Monica.

To be near her boy she now removed to Carthage; but her prayers, incessant though they were, seemed unanswered; and although Augustine was ever loving in his behaviour to his mother, yet, like many sons, he utterly refused to allow her any influence over his life, and she had but the one weapon—prayer.

In the following year another grief was added to her burden. While studying the works of Cicero, longings for a higher life were at last awakened in the soul of Augustine, and instead of satisfying them in the Church, he fell at this critical juncture into the Manichæan heresy.

The affliction of his mother may be easily imagined; but she never ceased to pray; and once, while thus praying and weeping, she was comforted by the words of an aged bishop, "Go thy way; it is impossible that the child of those prayers and tears should perish."

Augustine was now supporting himself by teaching grammar and philosophy at Carthage; but the insubordination and disorderly habits of his African pupils were so intolerable, that he meditated leaving Africa for Italy, whither a larger field of labour, and pupils of higher cultivation, invited him.

But his mother opposed this desire with all her power, fearful of losing him from her side, and so urgent were her entreaties that he allowed her to think she had prevailed, in which delusion she remained until she awoke one morning to find him gone, and to see the sails of the ship which bore him away disappear beneath the horizon.

Distracted with love and sorrow, she gave up all the ties which bound her to her native land and the comforts of home, and taking ship followed her beloved son to Italy with many tears, not knowing that God had sent him there, that the longing desire of her heart might be thus at length fulfilled.

Arriving at Rome, Augustine found immediate employment, but small support; for the Roman youth had yet a

worse habit than the unruly youth of Carthage,—they did not pay their fees, and the young African professor was in very great distress, when Symmachus, the Pagan prefect, appointed him to a vacant professorship at Milan, thus strangely instrumental in the cause of Christianity.

Here his mother, after a weary search, found him, and found also the reward of her patient love, being beyond measure surprised and delighted to find him a constant hearer of S. Ambrose. Together they attended the house of God; and although as yet he was only a hearer, still the errors of Manichæism were evidently losing their grasp on the fervent young African.

Then began those troubles which we recorded at the close of last chapter—the attempt of the empress Justina to introduce Arian worship into the city; the resistance of the people; the enthusiasm for Catholic truth, in which Augustine began warmly to share; the discovery of the relics of SS. Gervasius and Protasius, which Augustine records at length, as we have seen, in his autobiography, “The Confessions;” and the consequent triumph of the Faith.

The writings of S. Paul now became his constant study, and difficulties began to disappear, although the struggle in his mind was most violent. Hearing at this period of the heroic deeds of Antony and his brother monks, the contrast between their lives of heroic self-denial and his own self-indulgence affected him so deeply as to cause him violent agitation. Unable, in the conflict of his soul, to bear any society, even that of his dearest friend Alypius, he sought relief in the solitude of his garden, when he



heard as it were the voice of a child exclaiming, "Take up and read ; take up and read." As if it had been the voice of inspiration, he opened S. Paul's Epistle to the Romans at the words, "Not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof." The words came with such power to his soul, that, obedient to their voice, the whole course of his life was thenceforth changed.

The next vacation, in the autumn, he resigned his professorship, and retired, with his mother and Alypius, into the country, where they spent months together in deep spiritual retirement, and gave themselves to prayer and the study of God's Word.

The following Lent was spent in preparation for Baptism, under the instructions of S. Ambrose, by whom, on Easter Eve, A.D. 387, S. Augustine, with his son Adeodatus and his friend Alypius, were baptized in the Ambrosian Basilica.

Alypius had been his companion from childhood, had followed him in his relapse into Manichæism, and now followed him in his conversion, sharing with him the regenerating waters of Holy Baptism. He eventually became Bishop of Thagaste, the native place of his friend.

All the desire of her heart now accomplished, Monica yearned for her native land, and Augustine desired to accompany her back to Africa. They set out, and arrived at Ostia, whence they intended to sail for Italy, but tarried some time, in order to fit themselves for the fatigues of the voyage—no light trial in those days.

There, one evening, the mother and son stood alone at a certain window of their temporary habitation, when their thoughts were drawn from the beauty of external nature to that world of heavenly beauty upon which their longing hearts were set. They spoke together of those things which eye had not seen, nor ear heard, nor heart conceived, but which God had revealed through His spirit.

"My son," said Monica, "so far as I myself am concerned, I have no longer delight in this life. Why I tarry here I know not, since the hope I had in this world is now accomplished. For one thing I desired to linger here—to see thee a Catholic Christian. God has granted me yet more; for I see thee, despising earthly felicity, consecrated to His service, and what do I yet here?"

Scarcely five days after these words she was taken ill with a fever. During her illness she swooned, and, recovering, beheld grief depicted upon the faces of those around. "Here," she said, "you will bury your mother." And when they expressed a hope that she would live to see her native land, she replied, "Bury me where you will, and grieve not concerning it. Only this one thing I ask, remember me at God's altar wherever you may be." Then an access of illness forbade further words.

On the ninth day of her illness, and the fifty-sixth of her age, Augustine being then thirty-three years old, she breathed forth her soul to God.

The boy Adeodatus burst forth into a loud crying; but they checked him, as though they felt that tears violated the sanctity of that happy and holy death-bed.

"I closed her eyes," says S. Augustine, "and a great

sorrow filled my heart, and flowed forth in tears. But why," he adds, "did I grieve, save that our loving intercourse was broken?"

Euodius, a friend of Augustine, took up the Psalter, and began to sing. He was joined by the whole house; and many pious men and women came to join them. Augustine had now controlled his grief. The corpse was carried to the grave, the Eucharistic Sacrifice was offered, the last commendation to eternal peace said, they returned as they had come—without tears. But in the silent watches of the night, a hymn of S. Ambrose occurring to the thoughts of Augustine, opened the fount of his griefs, and he found relief in weeping. "Will any one blame me," he says, "if I wept that mother for one short hour, who wept for me many years, that I might live in Thy sight, O God?"

Augustine did not return immediately to Africa, fearing perhaps to return to the desolate home alone. He tarried a year longer in Italy, commencing his career as a writer by an exposure of the errors of the Manichæans, by whom he had been once seduced. At the end of the year, which he had spent chiefly in Rome, he returned home with certain of his friends and countrymen, and entered into deep retirement in his own house at Thagaste.

The same year in which Augustine was baptized, witnessed the defeat and death of the usurper Maximus. Not satisfied with the possession of Britain, Spain, and Gaul, he invaded the dominions of Valentinian, still counterfeiting the appearance of friendship till the last moment, that he might surprise the young emperor.

Valentinian had scarcely time to embark with his mother, Justina. Crossing the sea, he threw himself under the protection of Theodosius at Thessalonica, while Maximus made himself master of Italy, and also subdued Africa.

His triumph was of short continuance. Theodosius espoused the cause of his young colleague, entered Italy, and defeated Maximus in two great battles. Maximus himself was surprised in Aquileia, and brought as a captive, barefoot, with his hands tied, before Theodosius and Valentinian. Theodosius hesitated between justice and mercy, but yielded to the clamour of the soldiers, who took the usurper and beheaded him. He had reigned five years since the murder of Gratian. The British soldiers in his army who escaped, found refuge in Armorica, where they founded a settlement, whence the name Brittany.

About this time an event occurred in the East which first brought the eloquence of S. John Chrysostom into notoriety. The citizens of Antioch rose in rebellion, owing to an excess of taxation, and overthrew the statues of the emperor, of his deceased wife, and of his children, dragging them contemptuously through the city. The act bore far greater significance in those days than it would bear now, being considered equivalent to a declaration of revolt, and therefore was a capital offence.

Theodosius had one great fault, he acted too frequently under the impulse of sudden anger; and two imperial commissioners were sent to avenge the insult, with powers of life and death. They arrived, arrested the ringleaders, and proceeded by the aid of torture to discover all the guilty.

Meanwhile the bishop, Flavian, leaving an only sister on her death-bed, had gone to appease the fury of the emperor, while Chrysostom, then one of the priests of Antioch, strove to turn the prevailing terror to the spiritual advantage of the people. All Antioch was wrapped in gloom; the streets were almost empty. Mothers and sisters might be seen sitting on the steps before the judgment-hall, listening, with anguish upon their faces, to the cries of those under torture, which, to the shame of the age, was the usual means of extorting confession of guilt, and was no longer confined to the slave population, but extended to the whole body of citizens. The deathlike silence of the place testified the apprehensions of its inhabitants. None knew what the emperor's pleasure might be, whether he might not give the whole city to fire and sword. And Chrysostom, taking advantage of this, preached a sublime course of sermons, known as the sermons on the statues, in which he compared the agonizing suspense of the criminals to that which awaited a guilty world in the great Day of Wrath.

The public places were empty; but the churches were full. Men were sought for in the city as in a solitude, while the very Pagans forsook the places of amusement to listen to the eloquence of the gifted preacher, and sing the praises of God. A great change was visible in the whole population. Impure songs and profane oaths were heard no more. The shops were shut, and the whole city seemed as if it had become a sanctuary.

And, as in the case of Nineveh of old, God heard their prayers, and inclined the heart of the emperor to mercy.

The desired information being obtained, the commissioners paused to await the judgment of Theodosius upon their report; and the suspense became yet more painful.

Meanwhile Flavian reached the imperial presence, and intreated for pardon for the guilty city. But he shed tears when the emperor asked, "Did I deserve this outrage? or, if I did, might they not have spared the memory of her who is gone?" Still the kind and noble heart of Theodosius could not resist the plea of mercy, and he gave a free pardon to the whole city, saying, "It is no great thing for man to pardon man, when the Lord Christ prayed even for His murderers, saying, 'Father, forgive them.'" Flavian returned, preceded by yet more expeditious messengers; and the illumination of the city but faintly testified its joy.

But, alas! a far more tragic termination followed an act of wicked rebellion at Thessalonica. A certain charioteer, for an offence against the laws of nature, was imprisoned by Botheric, the governor of the city, and when the games took place in the circus, the people clamoured for his freedom, that he might as usual delight them by his skill. This request the governor sternly and properly refused to grant. Whereupon the people rose in general rebellion and slew Botheric, with his principal officers, dragging their mangled bodies through the streets.

When the emperor heard the news, he kindled into fury, and although Ambrose appeared to have calmed him, yet after the prelate had departed, Ruffinus, the chancellor, persuaded him to inflict a most disproportionate and indiscriminating revenge upon the city, namely, to order that seven thousand persons should be put to death in the circus

which had been the scene of their crime. The inhabitants were accordingly summoned, as if to behold the games, when the signal being given, as they supposed, for the sports, the soldiers closed the entrances and fell upon the defenceless population. They had to slay precisely seven thousand, and the bloody work lasted three hours. One unfortunate father, a foreign merchant, present by a most unhappy chance, offered his life and all his immense wealth for *one* only of his two boys. The soldiers agreed, but the father could not make the selection, loving them equally, and the impatient murderers slew both. Before the deed was accomplished, Theodosius repented, and sent to recall the order, but was too late—a sad example of the danger attached to absolute power, even in the hands of the best of rulers, one, of whom it was not unjustly observed, “If Brutus could have been recalled to life under his reign, he would have withdrawn his animosity to kings in the case of Theodosius.”

When Ambrose heard the sad news, he left Milan that he might not see the emperor; but wrote a most effectual letter to him, such as Nathan might have written to David, forbidding his presence during the Holy Mysteries.

After Ambrose returned to Milan, the emperor came to church, but the noble bishop met him at the porch and forbade him to enter. “David sinned and was forgiven,” said Theodosius. “Go thou and repent like David,” was the reply.

Thus, in his own person, Ambrose fulfilled the instructions he gave to his clergy—“If an unworthy person, general, prefect, or even he who wears the diadem, seeks

Communion, forbear to give it; your commission is greater than his. If you fear, refer him to me; rather would I shed my own blood than administer, unfitly, Blood so awful."

Eight months passed away before the penitent Theodosius was admitted to Communion. Christmas Day occurred in the period, and Theodosius wept bitterly because he was excluded from the Presence vouchsafed even to the lowest of his subjects. At length he was permitted to make a public acknowledgment of his crime, and in reparation he enacted a law, that no capital sentence should be executed till thirty days after the trial.

The sight of their emperor, prostrate on the floor of the church, must have given the people a most thrilling sense of the awful sanctity of Christianity, while it appealed to their deepest love and sympathy. It must be remembered, too, that Theodosius was no effeminate scion of royalty, but possibly the greatest emperor Rome ever knew. Gibbon says—"Posterity has applauded the virtuous firmness of the archbishop, and the example of Theodosius may prove the beneficial influence of those principles which could force a monarch, exalted above the apprehension of human punishment, to respect the laws and ministers of an invisible Judge."

In the administration of penance S. Ambrose knew no distinction of persons; but stern though he was to the powerful or unrepentant sinner, he was no less gentle and loving to the penitent of whatsoever degree. Paulinus, in his "Life of S. Ambrose," tells us, that when any confessed their sins to him in order to receive penance, he so



wept as to cause the penitent to weep also, as if he too had partaken in the fall.

Such was the character of this extraordinary man. Brave, yet gentle; bold as a lion in defence of the truth, which he valued more than life; gentle as a parent towards the sorrowing penitent.

It was customary at Rome at this time to appoint a fitting place where penitents, after the celebration of the Sacred Mysteries, at which they were not allowed to be present, might bewail their sins, the bishop and people joining in their lamentations. Suitable penance, such as fasting, abstinence from the bath, or the practice of other austerities, was enjoined; and finally, the penance completed, the penitent received public absolution. In the East the administration was somewhat different. A penitentiary priest was appointed in every church, to whom the bishop entrusted the examination of penitents; but a grievous scandal which occurred at Constantinople caused the suppression of this office, and the return to the more ancient custom, that the bishop should care for public penance, and the Faithful in general should retain the liberty mentioned by Origen, of choosing their own spiritual physician, or of approaching the Holy Mysteries without previous confession, if they felt their consciences unburdened, as is still the custom in the English Church.

S. Gregory Nazianzen was now passing his last days in the retirement of his native province. His sole luxuries were a garden and a fountain. He spent his last days in continual devotion. His knees were worn with kneeling,

and his whole thoughts and aspirations had gone before to the long home to which he was hastening.

After the manner of the saints, he was very rigorous in his self-denial. His bed was of straw, with a covering of sackcloth, and a single tunic was all the outward clothing of him who had been Bishop of Constantinople.

Yet his glory was only in the Lord. "As a fish cannot swim without water, and a bird cannot fly without air, so," said he, "a Christian cannot advance a step without Christ." Thus he wrote in the "*Carmina Sacra*," or Sacred Songs, which he left behind him.

He died in his ninetieth year, A.D. 391, and the same year that he was lost to the episcopate, Augustine was ordained priest at Hippo, in Africa.

Since his arrival in Africa, Augustine had passed his time in the strictest retirement, in company with a few chosen friends and his son Adeodatus. He had brought all the resources of his philosophy to bear on Christian controversies, and had written many valuable works, especially one written at Thagaste, entitled "*The Master*," which is a dialogue with his son Adeodatus, a youth gifted like his father, with remarkable talents, and of great promise, cut short about this time by his early death. "I had no part in that boy," says S. Augustine, "but the sin." The questions of Adeodatus in "*The Master*" evince such precocious power, that his father calls God to witness that he has ascribed no thoughts to his son but those he actually uttered.

The story of his conversion, and the facts of his earlier life, had spread the fame of S. Augustine far and wide, while the sacrifice he had made of his profession and

worldly prospects, his holy life, and his writings, led many to desire his ordination and subsequent advancement to the episcopal dignity. So marked was this feeling that he almost feared to leave his retirement at Thagaste, lest the same fate should befall him which befell S. Ambrose, who was ordained against his will, and the deep humility of Augustine made him shrink from the prospect.

But in this year he visited Valerius, Bishop of Hippo, and while he was present the bishop alluded, in a sermon, to the great need of another priest at Hippo, and the people unanimously seized upon Augustine and requested his ordination. Opposition was useless, and the ordination took place. Four years later, owing to his growing infirmities, the aged Valerius solicited Augustine to accept the post of Bishop Coadjutor of Hippo, and he was consecrated. For a short time the elder bishop survived to assist and counsel his younger colleague, and then, dying in peace, left the sole possession of the see to its last and greatest occupant, Augustine, who held it till his death, thirty-five years later. We shall constantly meet him in the future pages of the history of this period.

Meanwhile, Theodosius, with the full concurrence of S. Ambrose and his other spiritual advisers, issued severe laws against both Paganism and heresy. Men did not then understand the virtue of toleration—perhaps we should not ourselves had we lived in those days—and edict followed edict, absolutely prohibiting the exercise of the ancient religion of the empire.

“Let no man whatsoever, of any rank or order, presume

to offer sacrifice in any city or village to lifeless images, or to worship household gods with incense." The penalty was death. Further laws were also made prohibiting the assemblies of Arians or other heretics, and when they complained, S. Augustine reminded them that such exercise of authority was the duty of the sovereign. "Not one of us, Catholic or Donatist," he says, "condemns the laws prohibiting Pagan worship, and they are far more severe than those which repress heresy, for the punishment in *their* case is death."

Such, indeed, was the law, that the simplest Pagan rite entailed the forfeiture of the house or land thus polluted, and the rite of sacrifice to a Pagan deity, *or demon*, was rendered a capital offence. But Paganism found no martyrs to die in its defence, no devoted followers resorted to the gloom of the Catacombs, no priest defied torture or death sooner than abandon his gods; and the few who had trusted vainly to secrecy, but were, nevertheless, discovered, apostatized (if the word can be used) directly they were confronted with the civil power. What a contrast to the behaviour of the Christians under like circumstances, and how convincing a proof of the emptiness of polytheism! Twenty years later the presence of Paganism was unknown to the law; *it ceased to exist* in its outward and tangible manifestation.

Yet a vain effort was made in its defence at Alexandria. The Pagans fortified the Temple of Serapis, under the leadership of Olympus, a Pagan philosopher. They appealed to the emperor, and while the appeal was pending they made sallies, and, seizing such Christians

as they could surprise, endeavoured to compel them, by cruel tortures, to sacrifice; crucifying, or otherwise cruelly slaying, those who refused.

The Temple of Serapis, in which they had fortified themselves, was built on a quadrangular terrace, raised to the height of more than a hundred steps, and exceedingly spacious. The idol was of enormous size, and, with its extended hands, touched both extremities of the temple. It was the representation of a venerable man, with beard and long hair, and was considered of extraordinary sanctity. Therefore the insurgents became exceedingly bold and desperate, and utterly refused to submit to the local authorities, hoping that the emperor would grant them toleration.

But they were bitterly disappointed. The answer of Theodosius arrived. He refused to sanction any truce with idolatry; and while he refused to avenge the Christians who had been slain, lest such vengeance should dim the glory of their martyrdom, he ordered the temples of Alexandria to be destroyed, as the cause of the sedition. The Pagans were reduced to despair, embraced the amnesty, and surrendered.

The Temple of Serapis was therefore abandoned. Olympus fled to Italy. It was currently reported that the preceding night, in the stillness of the empty temple, he heard a voice singing "Alleluia," and accepted the omen.

A report had been industriously circulated by the Pagans that the Christians were afraid to meddle with Serapis, lest the heavens should fall and the earth be dissolved. Great, therefore, was the consternation on the

part of the superstitious when a soldier, at the command of the bishop, Theophilus, approached the idol with an axe. He struck a fearful blow on its jaw; blow followed blow, till the head falling off, a number of rats scampered away, amidst the laughter of the people; and the scattered limbs were dragged away and burnt piece by piece, while the trunk perished by similar means in the amphitheatre, once red with Christian blood.

It had been the custom to attribute the rising of the Nile to Serapis, and the Pagans fondly hoped it would refuse to rise. It rose higher than it had ever been known to rise before, and they hoped it was about to do injury to the city, when it gently subsided.

The destruction of Serapis sealed the fate of idolatry in Egypt; city after city followed the example of the capital, and churches and monasteries arose upon the ruins of heathen temples. During the progress of their destruction many dark deeds were brought to light. There were found in the *adyta*, or secret chambers, the heads of infants with gilded lips, and features illustrative of divers cruel ways of inflicting death, at the sight of which horrors many Pagans abjured their false religion. Artifices whereby the people had been deceived were likewise exposed; hollow idols of wood or brass, into which the priest entering, made the supposed god to utter what commands he pleased; secret passages, whereby many dark deeds had been consummated, and many mechanical contrivances of great skill, particularly an aperture in the Temple of Serapis, so contrived that at one particular moment in the year, during his festival, the sun from the

cloudless sky of Egypt saluted the lips of the god, as with a kiss, while the multitude marvelled at the *miracle* of the sunbeam as it glanced across the inner gloom.

The famous temples of the isle of Canopus, the wonder of Egypt, twelve miles above Alexandria, with their caverns, consecrated to every kind of foul and cruel idolatry, were likewise ruthlessly destroyed, and on their site rose churches and monasteries, so that the island, once foul with the smoke of idol sacrifices, and the blood of slaughtered victims, was now vocal with prayer and praise, addressed to the Triune God, while the martyrs who had perished in the same locality during a former generation, were especially venerated at Canopus.

In the West, Valentinian endeavoured to make a similar unsparing destruction of idols and idolatry, but found greater difficulty, the prefect, Symmachus, still heading the opposition.

All men, we are told, save the Pagans, loved Valentinian. His mother, Justina, was dead, and he was now a catechumen, under the instruction of S. Ambrose. The precepts of the saint, and the example of the great Theodosius, had completely effaced the stains of the Arian heresy from his youthful mind, and he was earnestly anticipating Baptism, while his justice and piety commended him to the prayers of all classes.

He had entrusted the care of his person to a Frank, named Arbogastes, who, having distinguished himself in the campaign against Maximus, had been appointed by Theodosius commander of the forces in Gaul. But he abused the power thus obtained, to follow the example

of the tyrant against whom his prowess had been displayed, and Valentinian was soon made aware that his life was in danger, and that he was surrounded by treacherous foes. In this perplexity he sent to beg Ambrose to hasten to his presence at Vienne, in Gaul, where he was detained by the jealousy of Arbogastes. He wished him, he said, to be his surety to Arbogastes, and he desired to receive Baptism, for which he had long been preparing at his hands. There were, indeed, other prelates of great sanctity in Gaul, such as S. Martin; but he wished especially to receive the Sacrament from him whom he had once been taught to persecute.

After the messenger had gone his impatience was continual. He often asked, "Think you I shall soon see my father?" Ambrose was hastening to him when these forebodings were unhappily fulfilled.

It was the eve of Whitsunday, when candidates were usually baptized, and the imperial catechumen was found dead in his chamber, strangled by the guards of Arbogastes, who vainly endeavoured to make it appear that the young prince had committed suicide. This unhappy event occurred on Whitsun Eve, A.D. 392.

The body was yielded to his sisters, and buried near that of Gratian, at Milan. At the funeral celebration, Ambrose poured forth his grief and his hope in a touching oration yet preserved to us. He spoke of the desire of Valentinian for Baptism, and argued that, like many of the martyrs, who had but received the Baptism of Blood, he had fully received the benefits of that sacrament for the actual reception whereof he had been so earnestly pre-



paring. "Christ Himself," he said, "Who loved thee, baptized thee, when human aid was wanting."

Theodosius was already informed of the fate of his youthful colleague, when an embassy arrived from Eugenius, whom Arbogastes had invested with the imperial dignity, offering peace, if he would but acknowledge him as Emperor of the West.

Theodosius would not commit himself to any definite promises; but dismissing the ambassadors with fair words, prepared himself for any emergency that might arise. There could be no true peace with murderers and usurpers.

So Eugenius felt; and as Theodosius was an earnest Christian, *he* favoured the Pagans by allowing them the free exercise of their religion. It was the last time it ever was granted to them. They offered multitudes of sacrifices, poured forth the blood, inspected the entrails, and pronounced victory to Eugenius, who once more set up the Pagan ensigns in the army. The altar of victory at Rome was rebuilt, and the revenues of the temples were restored. S. Ambrose sternly reproved the usurper, wherefore he promised, if he gained the victory in the war, which every one felt was impending, to turn the cathedral of Milan into a stable. He had the will, but, as we shall see, God denied him the power.

At length Theodosius took up arms to avenge the murder of his youthful ally. He entered Italy, and in the first engagement his Gothic allies, under Gainas, were so unsuccessful, that his chief officers advised instant retreat; but Theodosius nobly replied, that never should the Cross yield before the ensigns of Hercules.

He passed the whole night in prayer, watering the ground with his tears, and at length overcome with fatigue he fell asleep. At cockcrow he dreamed that S. John and S. Philip had come to his aid.

The battle was renewed, and in the crisis of the engagement Theodosius leaped from his horse, and advancing at the head of his troops with the words, "Where is the God of Theodosius?" charged the enemy. A violent wind suddenly arose, which blew full in the face of the foe and retarded all their arrows, while it blinded them with dust, and forced them to break their array. Even the Pagans felt that Heaven was fighting against them, and they gave way in utter confusion. A portion fled, another portion surrendered to Theodosius, who ordered them to bring Eugenius to him. Eugenius was posted upon a neighbouring hill, and seeing these men coming, he asked them, "Have you taken Theodosius?" "We have come to take *you*," was the reply, and they stripped him of the imperial raiment and led him bound to Theodosius. Losing all courage, he pleaded piteously for his life, but in vain. He was beheaded; but the victor spared, and provided for, his wife and children, who had taken sanctuary; neither did he suffer any person to gratify his private revenge or cupidity at the expense of the vanquished.

Arbogastes committed suicide when all was over. Theodosius wrote to S. Ambrose to request a thanksgiving for his victory. "I held your letter in my hands while I offered up the Holy Sacrifice," replied the bishop, whose heart might well overflow with gratitude.

The defeat of Eugenius sealed the downfall of Paganism.

Before Theodosius left Italy, he exhorted the senators of Rome to sweep away all traces of idolatry. They replied that they could not change the customs of twelve hundred years to embrace a new religion. But they had to deal with a man of unflinching purpose, and zeal for God. He confiscated the revenues which had maintained the Pagan sacrifices. The victims ceased to be slain, the ceremonies were neglected, and at length the public worship of Paganism ceased to exist in Rome herself.

To this change the Pagan historians, of course, impute the subsequent downfall of the Roman power.

The observance of Sunday as a day of rest from labour became general, while it was carefully distinguished from the Sabbath, the separate observance of which day was fast declining. Theodosius enacted that no civil business should be done, and no amphitheatres should be opened, on the Lord's-day. The observance of Holy Week assumed the features it has ever since retained during this period, the one evening celebration of the year taking place on Maundy Thursday. Good Friday was spent as a day of intense solemnity; and on Easter Eve cities were illuminated, and worshippers, bearing torches and tapers, filled the churches to keep the vigil of the Resurrection, passing the whole night in devotion. The administration of Baptism ordinarily took place on Easter Eve, and the newly baptized wore their white robes during the octave. Theodosius enacted that during Lent no criminal proceedings should take place, and no judicial torture or corporeal punishment be inflicted. He also

ordered a general release of all prisoners confined, for minor offences, to take place at Easter.

S. Jerome had now lived many years in his retirement at Bethlehem, but could not escape from controversy. In the year 392, Epiphanius, Bishop of Cyprus, visited Jerusalem, and during his sojourn in the Holy Land, where he had founded a monastery, he forcibly ordained Paulinianus, S. Jerome's brother, thereby giving very great offence to John, Bishop of Jerusalem, the successor of S. Cyril. Epiphanius retorted by accusing John of holding the errors popularly imputed to Origen, which he referred to eight heads, including the belief that the souls of men are angels imprisoned in human bodies for their sins; that the devil will ultimately be restored to his place in Heaven; that Adam and Eve were incorporeal before their fall; that we shall rise with new bodies at the resurrection; and other startling novelties in Christian, or rather anti-Christian, doctrine.

All these errors Epiphanius, apparently without just reason, imputed to John. He was a man of singularly disputatious spirit, and somewhat arbitrary in his manner. He gave great offence by destroying the curtain of a church near Bethel, because it had a figure embroidered thereupon, although the use of such pictures was allowed at that period both in the East and the West.\* Epiphanius embodied these charges in a letter to John, which Jerome caused to be translated into Latin. John replied by a circular letter, addressed to all the bishops, and

\* So it would appear from S. Gregory Nyssa, in Theod.; Prudentius, Steph. 9 and 93; S. Paulinus, of Nola, Natal. 9 v. 511; S. Augustine, &c.

charged Epiphanius, in a sermon, when he was present, with the heresy of Anthropomorphism, or the belief that God possesses bodily parts and passions. Epiphanius replied by abjuring the heresy in question, and calling upon John to abjure Origenism, whereupon loud laughter arose in the church, as at a shrewd retort.

Here we must leave the quarrel for the present, but it will be seen that it proved the cause of far more deadly evil subsequently.

We must not omit mention of one Vigilantius, a native of Gaul, who visited S. Jerome about this time with a letter of introduction from Paulinus, of Nola. Disagreements arose, and when Vigilantius returned to the West, a fierce controversy took place between him and the recluse of Bethlehem. Vigilantius appears to have been a Protestant by anticipation. He assailed the veneration paid to the saints and their relics, the prevalent belief in miracles, and wrote violently against the celibate life and the monastic system.

He does not seem to have had any followers, and his memory only survives in the writings of his great opponents.

The fatigues of the late war had been very detrimental to the health of the emperor, and he soon became convinced that his end was near. He commended his children, Arcadius and Honorius, to the care of Stilicho, who had married his niece; made his last will, in which he particularly directed pardon to be given to all those guilty of political offences, and then gave his last concern to the welfare of the Church. He died at Milan on the

17th of January, A.D. 395, in the sixtieth year of his age; and the glory of Rome died with him. Seldom has an emperor so pious and able ruled so mighty a realm, and his conspicuous virtues arrested its fall. Notwithstanding the recent calamity of a civil war, his death, says Gibbon, was universally lamented. The barbarians whom he had vanquished, and the churchmen by whom he had been subdued, alike celebrated his virtues. "I loved the man," said S. Ambrose, "who thought better of a reprover than of a flatterer, and enquired for me with his dying breath." His body was embalmed and brought to Constantinople, where it was buried in the tomb of the emperors—the last monarch of the undivided empire of Rome, whom East and West alike delighted to obey; by whose edicts Paganism had been abolished, and the Catholic Faith established as the national religion.

The ruin of Paganism, in the age of Theodosius, Gibbon observes, is perhaps the only instance of the total extirpation of any ancient and popular superstition. It was a work which has endeared the name of Theodosius to every believer in Christianity.

## CHAPTER XIX.

### FROM THE DEATH OF THEODOSIUS TO THE SACK OF ROME BY ALARIC.

A.D. 395-410.

ANOTHER great Christian hero comes so prominently forward on the stage of ecclesiastical history at this period, that it seems appropriate to commence this chapter with a sketch of his early life and ministry.

S. John Chrysostom\* was born at Antioch about the year 347, of a noble family, whose ancestors had borne high civil and military authority in the East. His father, Secundus, and mother, Arethusa, were both Christians. His father died while he was yet an infant, and his mother remained a widow, and educated her children, John and his sister. The great abilities the boy manifested led them to give him all the educational advantages in their power. He became at an early age the pupil of the great heathen sophist, Libanius, who declared, when dying, that John should have been his successor had not the Christians stolen him.

At the age of eighteen he became disgusted with the emptiness of rhetoric and the injustice of the legal profession, and applied himself with avidity to the study of

\* The name Chrysostom, or the golden mouthed, was afterwards given him on account of his great eloquence.

theology. S. Meletius, Bishop of Antioch, observing his ability, encouraged him to be his constant companion. He instructed him, baptized him—for, like S. Augustine, he had delayed his baptism—and ordained him reader. John prevailed upon Theodore, afterwards Bishop of Mopsuestia, and Maximus, afterwards Bishop of Seleucia, who had been his fellow-student under Libanius, to embrace the ascetic life with him, as also a more intimate friend named Basil.

Following, therefore, the precedent set by the saints, Chrysostom retired to the neighbouring mountains, and, under the tuition of an aged anchorite, lived a life of the strictest mortification for more than four years, during which he wrote his book in defence of the monastic life. It was needed; for at that time the extreme austerities of the monks were causing a reaction against bodily mortifications, and even strictness of life, in Antioch.

At length, finding his constitution giving way, he was forced to return to the city, where he gave himself entirely up to the service of God, being then in his twenty-sixth year. Five years he served at the altar as sub-deacon, and was then ordained deacon by Meletius. His capacity for preaching was recognized, and his private instructions highly valued; but he was not permitted to preach publicly while yet a deacon, according to the existing rule, and he was consequently ordained priest, A.D. 385, by the Bishop Flavian, who had succeeded Meletius.

One of his early discourses was preached on Christmas Day, the observance of which festival, as distinct from the Epiphany, had been only recently, as he tells us,



introduced into the churches of the East. His eloquence rendered him popular as a preacher; but his full powers were not appreciated until the occasion of the deep apprehension which fell upon the people after they had broken the statues of Theodosius and his family, when the great preacher rose fully to the occasion.

Upon the death of Theodosius, the empire was again divided. His elder son, Arcadius, became emperor of the East, and Honorius, then a mere child, of the West, the seats of government being Constantinople and Rome.

Their early instruction had been committed to the care of the learned Arsenius, who, having chastised Arcadius with the rod for some boyish fault, so grievously offended the young prince that he plotted against his tutor's life. Whereupon Arsenius fled to the deserts of Scetis, where he embraced the monastic life. Theodosius strove in vain to discover his retreat; and at his accession to the throne Arcadius renewed the search; this time with success. He assured Arsenius that he had repented of his designs, begged his forgiveness, and implored his return. But in vain. Arsenius replied, "God grant us all the pardon of our sins! but I am dead to the world."

But the real rulers of the world were Stilicho in the West, and Rufinus in the East, who had risen to power under Theodosius, and now ruled in the name of his sons. Stilicho was an able and great statesman, as also a skilful general. Rufinus was only distinguished by his violent passions. Their rivalry was shortly terminated by an act of treachery which has deeply stained the memory of Stilicho. The Goths, under Gainas, who had fought

against Eugenius, were about to return to the Eastern army, to which they rightly belonged. Stilicho availed himself of the opportunity to gain their affections and secure their assistance in the removal of his rival. They returned homeward with the deadliest instructions and intentions towards Rufinus, who was generally hated.

At the distance of a mile from Constantinople, the Goths halted, and Rufinus came, in attendance upon the young emperor, to receive their salutations. Gradually the wings of the army wheeled round from either side, and enclosed him in a living circle, when a soldier, rushing forward before the victim even comprehended his danger, buried his sword in his breast, and Rufinus fell, groaned, and died at the feet of the affrighted Arcadius. Stilicho, however, gained little by the deed. He never obtained any ascendancy over Arcadius, and was forced to be content to rule the West in the name of Honorius. The two divisions of the empire rapidly assumed the position of independent states, and were never re-united.

But a fearful crisis was at hand. The Goths, taking advantage of the death of Theodosius, burst into Macedonia, under the mighty and terrible Alaric, a name destined to become a household word. In the course of a year he carried his ravages into every district of Greece. Stilicho entered the Peloponnesus to oppose him; but Alaric marched out with his booty and his captives, and was master of Epirus before Stilicho knew he had escaped, whereupon Arcadius purchased a treacherous peace.

It was but of short continuance, and meanwhile Gildo, the tyrant of Africa, rose in rebellion, and, committing

frightful atrocities, contended in arms with Stilicho and his own brother, Mascezel. His army forsook him at the moment of battle, and Gildo committed suicide in prison.

The Donatists took advantage of this war to commit great outrages upon the Catholics. Optatus, one of their bishops, was so much attached to the party of Gildo that he was called the Gildonian. He was attended by a troop of soldiers, with whom he committed atrocious crimes and cruelties until the fall of his patron. He was thrown into prison, where he died, and the Donatists revered him as a martyr. S. Augustine was unceasing in his labours for the conversion of these misguided men, with whom he frequently met in public disputations, in which he was so successful that the Donatists promised remission of sins to those who should remove that "wolf" out of the way. We shall return to the subject hereafter.

In the midst of these gathering clouds, S. Ambrose was removed from the evil to come to his eternal rest. After an ordination he was taken ill and confined to his bed. Stilicho sent to beseech him to pray for recovery, as neither the Church nor the state could sustain his loss at such a time of impending calamity. As they entreated him to grant their request, he replied, "I have not lived so as to be ashamed to live, neither do I fear to die, for we have a good Master." He prepared himself with edifying meekness for his end. Once, as he was praying, he told those who prayed with him, "I have seen the Lord Jesus, Who has smiled upon me." Through the Passion-tide of A.D. 397, he sank gradually, and his afflicted flock perceived that he was about to be taken from them.

All Good Friday they watched him as he sank. From five o'clock in the evening his lips moved incessantly in prayer, until Easter Eve dawned, when a bishop, who was amongst the watchers, having lain down to take a little rest, heard a voice, which called him thrice by name, and said, "Rise quickly, he is ready to depart." He arose, and gave the saint "the Body of the Lord," which having received, he departed to keep the eternal Easter in heaven. It was the tenth anniversary of the baptism of S. Augustine.

The following November, S. Martin, the Apostle of Gaul, was also taken from the conflict. Willing to live, if God designed further labour for him, he yet longed to depart and be with Christ. He sent for his disciples, and told them that his end was near. "Why, O Father, do you leave us?" they cried with one voice; "the wolves will seize your flock; we know you long to be with Christ, but pity us whom you are deserting." Moved to tears, he prayed aloud, "Lord, if I be yet necessary to Thy people, I refuse not the toil. *Thy* will be done."

He sank beneath the fever which had attacked him, but would only lie on hair-cloth and ashes, saying it became a Christian thus to die. He continually gazed, as if entranced, towards heaven. As the end drew near, he thought he saw the arch-enemy near with his final temptations. "What doest thou here, thou beast of blood?" he exclaimed; "thou hast no part in me; I am going to the bosom of Abraham;" and he passed away to his rest. He has ever been a popular saint in England, many churches in all parts of the country being dedicated

to him. It was about this period that S. Ninian built the first church of stone erected in these islands, as it is commonly supposed, and dedicated it to *S. Martin*.

Nectarius, the Bishop of Constantinople, who had succeeded S. Gregory, died in September, A.D. 397. Some little time was spent in deliberation upon the choice of a successor. Party spirit ran high, and many candidates for the dignity presented themselves, crowding at the gates of the palace and offering presents, until the people were so scandalized, that they besought the *emperor* to select a fitting person.

His choice fell upon S. John Chrysostom, whose fame was now spread throughout the empire, and he was unanimously elected by clergy and laity. So much was he beloved at Antioch, and so unwilling was he supposed to be to leave it, that he was enticed out of the city by the governor under pretence of ecclesiastical business, placed in a chariot, and sent under the care of officers to Constantinople.

He submitted, as to the will of God, and consented to be consecrated. A council was called to sanction the appointment, Theophilus, of Alexandria, being especially requested to be present. The Egyptian prelate was very unwilling to consent to the appointment, because he read the character of Chrysostom, and feared that he would never be the pliant tool which Nectarius had been, and which the patriarchs of Alexandria would have desired always to find in the rival prelates of the Imperial City. There had always been a jealousy between the sees since the Council of Constantinople exalted that city above

Alexandria in ecclesiastical importance, and it affords the key to much of the subsequent history.

Theophilus was, however, compelled to submit. Eutropius, the chief eunuch, whose influence had been used in favour of Chrysostom, showed him accusations which had been laid against him, and told him they should be pressed unless he consented to the new appointment. Theophilus, who had much reason to fear enquiry into his character and mode of governing his church, thereupon yielded, and Chrysostom was consecrated in February, A.D. 398, to the second episcopal rank in the Church.

So striking was the eloquence of the new prelate, so saintly his life, that the choice was abundantly justified. Accustomed, as we have seen, from youth, to the mortification of the flesh, he expended the ample revenues of his see upon works of charity, such as the maintenance of the poor and the erection of hospitals, while he neglected, or refused to maintain, the lavish and ostentatious hospitality which had distinguished his courtly predecessor.

It will easily be imagined that this course gained him enemies amongst the more worldly of his brethren, while it endeared him beyond measure to the hearts of his people, who forsook circus and amphitheatre, fascinated by the brilliant eloquence of his sermons.

Foremost amongst his enemies were Eudoxia, the empress, and the ladies of the court, whose fashionable follies the preacher had sternly rebuked. Eutropius was also offended because the patriarch had withheld the pecuniary acknowledgment of his services, to which he fancied himself entitled, and, in conjunction with the discontented

clergy, they laboured day and night to secure the ruin of Chrysostom.

Eutropius procured the enactment of a law, forbidding the privilege of sanctuary to those who had fallen under the imperial displeasure, and authorizing the forcible seizure of such as had already taken refuge in the churches.

The law was aimed at certain private enemies of his own, but he was forced to cause its violation, himself, in a few months. He fell under the displeasure of the emperor, and fled to the church to save his life. In accordance with his own law, they endeavoured to force him from the sanctuary; but Chrysostom interposed and delivered him.

A crowd of people assembled, to whom the patriarch preached on the instability of human greatness, pointing out Eutropius, who was lying beneath the altar, as a striking example. However, Eutropius was rash enough to go beyond the precincts of the church, was banished to Cyprus, and thence, at the instigation of his enemy, Gainas the Goth, sent to Chalcedon, tried, and beheaded.

Meanwhile the feud, commenced at Jerusalem by Epiphanius of Salamis, was assuming larger proportions, and threatening to involve other and more important interests in the controversy.

Ruffinus, the friend of Jerome, took up the defence of Origen, and maintained that the inculpatated passages in his works were interpolations of his adversaries. By these means the growth of Origenism was encouraged, the more startling propositions, which were yet involved in the general reasoning, being kept out of sight. Jerome was

earnestly requested by his friends in Rome to send a true copy of the works Ruffinus had edited, in order that they might discover the impiety of both editor and author.

He did so, and Ruffinus was censured, while Origen was condemned by all the West.

But the person most eager to undertake the condemnation of Origen was Theophilus of Alexandria. He had been engaged in a bitter contest with certain heretics in his own diocese, known as "Anthropomorphites," who ascribed a human shape and corporeal attributes to Almighty God. These Anthropomorphites reviled Theophilus and his coadjutors as Origenists, and, in order to vindicate his own orthodoxy, he became the leader of the attack upon the doctrines of Origen. The Egyptian monks were very generally affected with Anthropomorphism, dwelling especially upon the words, "Let Us make man in our image," and arguing that therefore man resembled God in his bodily shape and form. One of the most pious of these men, named Serapion, being convinced of his error, could hardly pray, so accustomed had he been to frame a mental image of God in human form. "You have taken from me my God," he cried, with tears, "and I no longer know whom to worship."

But the greater number of the monks took a very different line. They left their monasteries and crowded into Alexandria, denouncing Theophilus, and even threatening his life, meekness and gentleness not being characteristic virtues of the Egyptian monks. In this extremity Theophilus saved himself, or, at least, the peace of the city, by a subterfuge. "When I see your faces," he cried, "I



see, as it were, the Face of God." "Anathematize Origen" was the cry. "I do anathematize him. I disapprove of his writings, and have long resolved to condemn them."

He was true to his latter statement, and anathematized Origen in the Paschal letters, which, according to custom, he sent to all churches. Jerome highly extolled his pious zeal.

But the motives of Theophilus were very questionable. He was rather a violent partizan than a zealous Christian, and personal motives soon became mixed up with his zeal for orthodoxy.

The priest Isidore, one of the most eminent of his clergy, had received a thousand pieces of gold to distribute amongst the poor, upon condition that he should do it secretly, without the knowledge of Theophilus, who, they feared, would appropriate the money for other purposes, such as building, to which he was passionately attached. Isidore disposed of the money as he was requested. It came to the ears of Theophilus, and two months later he accused the priest, then eighty years of age, of an abominable crime, said to have been committed eighteen years before, and suborned a false witness to prove it.

Isidore fled to Nitria, and the false witness, confessing his guilt, took sanctuary. Theophilus wrote to all his suffragans, bidding them drive the monks who presided over the rest from Nitria. These came to Alexandria to know why they were condemned, and amongst them Ammonius, one of four eminent monks of Nitria, known as the "four tall brothers." Theophilus lost all command of

himself. He took off his pallium, and, throwing it around the neck of Ammonius as though he would strangle him, struck him on the nose till the blood gushed forth, while he cried, "Heretic, anathematize Origen." Whereupon the monks returned to their dwellings, and continued to rule as usual, confident in the purity of their intentions.

Theophilus hastily convened a council, and excommunicated the tall brothers, under pretence that they maintained false doctrines, after which he procured soldiers, and attacked the monastery in the night. His destined victims, the "tall brethren," escaped him, hidden in a well, which was concealed by a covering; but, failing to find them, he burnt the monastery, with the sacred books and the reserved Sacrament. A young boy perished in the flames, and the brethren were dispersed in all directions, the hard-hearted patriarch forbidding any one to give them shelter.

About this time the Arians, who were still very numerous in Constantinople, but who were forced to worship without the walls, adopted the practice of singing hymns, containing their heretical doctrines, in the streets of the city by night. To counteract the effect of such songs, S. Chrysostom appointed some Catholics to sing also during the night. They performed their nocturnal psalmody with more display than the Arians had used, carrying silver crosses and waxen torches. The Arians, who were still as insolent as of old times, could not endure this, and fell upon the Catholic singers with such fury that a general riot began, and some private persons who had taken part in the affray were slain on either side.

This occasioned the enactment of a law forbidding Arian psalmody in public, and, as the law was generally ascribed to S. Chrysostom, it rendered his enemies more numerous than before. Such was the state of affairs when, as we shall shortly see, he was drawn into the Origenistic controversy.

Driven out of Egypt by Theophilus, and hunted from place to place, the tall brothers, with their companions, reached Constantinople; fifty aged men, venerable in appearance by their gray hair and the traces austere devotion had left on their faces. They moved Chrysostom even to tears by their story, and he admitted them to be present at the services, but forbade them to communicate till their innocence was formally proved.

The tall brothers appealed to the court, and Theophilus was summoned to Antioch. Openly saying, "I go to court to depose John," he started for Constantinople, previously appealing to Epiphanius for support. Whereupon the latter called upon Chrysostom to anathematize Origen, which the Bishop of Constantinople did not feel bound to do. Epiphanius started for Constantinople, where, in defiance of ecclesiastical law, he ordained clergy as he had done before during the quarrel he had initiated at Jerusalem; but, without achieving any result, returned to Cyprus to die, at the age of nearly a hundred years.

At length Theophilus arrived, bringing with him a ship-load of bribes and presents, a train of Egyptian marines to overawe the populace, and thirty-five Egyptian bishops, wherewith to constitute an irregular synod.

The synod was held at a suburb of the city called "The

Oak." All those whose enmity Chrysostom had excited by the plainness of his reproofs were there, and they were supported to the fullest extent by the influence of Eudoxia and the ladies of the court.

But, of course, they provided themselves with charges more fit to be publicly adduced. Twenty-nine accusations, partly founded upon passages in his sermons, were alleged against him; *e. g.* his emphatic invitations to sinners to trust in the Divine mercy were construed as incentives to continue in sin. One charge, which he denied with great vehemence, was, that he had administered the Holy Communion to people who were not fasting.

As he refused to appear in person, he was condemned by this self-constituted council in his absence. Arcadius was called upon to enforce the sentence, and at the instigation of Eudoxia readily consented. S. Chrysostom was dragged forcibly from his cathedral, and hurried away into Bithynia.

The people were at first mute with astonishment. The same night an earthquake shook the city, which they attributed to the Divine anger, and rose tumultuously in open revolt against the government. Theophilus escaped, but his unfortunate followers, monks and mariners alike, were slaughtered without pity in the streets of the city. Eudoxia rose in alarm, and throwing herself at the feet of her husband, confessed that the only hope of safety lay in the recall of Chrysostom. He returned amidst a striking demonstration. The city was illuminated, the Bosphorus crowded with vessels, and, amidst the thunder of psalms and canticles, he was attended from the port to the

cathedral by the exulting populace, who forced him to ascend the episcopal throne, without waiting for the revocation of the sentence, which was, however, speedily pronounced by a synod of sixty bishops.

But the designs of the enemy were only suspended. In September, a statue was erected to Eudoxia near the cathedral, to which honours somewhat resembling those formerly given to the statues of the heathen emperors were paid, while the tumult interrupted the services.

S. Chrysostom is said to have begun a sermon upon the subject with these words: "Again Herodias dances; again she demands the head of John." Another council of hostile bishops confirmed the former sentence, and a detachment of barbarian troops was introduced into the city to execute it.

It was Easter Eve (A.D. 404), and the solemn Baptism of catechumens was about to take place, when four hundred barbarians broke into the place, dispersed the candidates, mingled the blood of the clergy with the baptismal water, cast those who supported the bishop into prison, and tortured others even within the churches.

The strife continued till Whitsuntide, when, the opposition being subdued, Arcadius commanded the final expulsion of the archbishop.

Chrysostom, for the sake of his flock, consented to depart privately, and while the people waited for him at the western door, eager to defend him, he escaped by the eastern, repeating to himself the words of holy Job, "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked I return thither." The fatal day was marked by the

conflagration of the cathedral, the senate-house, and the neighbouring buildings.

The place of his exile was Cucusus, in the Lesser Armenia, where, after a painful journey—for he suffered grievously from sickness—he arrived about the middle of September. The bishop offered to resign the see in his favour, and every one treated him with sympathy. In the end of the year the inroads of Isaurian barbarians filled the country with terror, and forced him to take refuge in the castle of Arabissus. It was a most trying winter. The snow impeded all communication; for they were amongst the ridges of Mount Taurus, and in his severe illness he could not obtain the alleviation of medicine.

When communication was restored, he maintained a correspondence with the most distant provinces, and his stirring epistles animated the Faithful to destroy Pagan worship in Phœnicia, heresy in Cyprus, and to support the missions in distant Scythia or Persia.

He fearlessly appealed from the local synod which had condemned him, to the decision of a general council.

Three years he thus laboured; but the jealousy of those who abused power in the name of Arcadius was aroused, and his guards were bidden to remove him yet further, to the inhospitable desert of Pityus, and were also bidden to allow him no rest by the way. So they hurried him on through scorching heat or drenching rain, until they came to a place called Comana, and took shelter for the night in the church of the martyr S. Basiliscus, who had suffered under Maximin. Here, as they lodged in the buildings attached to the church, it is said that the martyr appeared

to S. Chrysostom and said, "Be of good cheer, brother John, to-morrow thou shalt be with me." Feeling sure that his end was near, he begged them, in the morning, to let him remain in the church, for he was too ill to proceed. But his cruel guards hurried him on, saying such were their orders. They had only gone three miles when they saw he was dying, and returned to the church. He asked for white garments, which they gave him.

Still fasting, he received the last sacraments, and offering himself to God's Will, gently breathed his last, with the dying exclamation, "Glory be to God for all things." It was the sixtieth year of his age and the tenth of his Episcopate, the 14th of September, A.D. 407.

The Western empire had meanwhile enjoyed comparative peace. It was the calm before the storm. In the end of the year 402, Alaric crossed the Alps, and appeared suddenly before Milan. Honorius fled to the inaccessible fortress of Ravenna, on the Adriatic, while Stilicho summoned all the forces he could command from all parts of the empire, even the legion which defended the wall of Hadrian from the Caledonians.

Obedient to his orders, they issued through every Alpine pass, and surrounded the invader in the plains of Pollentia, near Turin. A bloody battle ensued, which ended in the complete defeat of Alaric, whose infantry were annihilated, although he managed to escape with the greater part of his cavalry. Even then, in his desperation, he attempted to reach Rome through the passes of the Apennines, and so terrible was he even in the hour of

defeat, that the affrighted Romans bought him off with the promise of a pension and an undisturbed retreat into his own dominions.

It was in the rejoicing consequent upon this deliverance which had well earned for Stilicho the gratitude of his countrymen, that the last gladiatorial combats took place.

While they were proceeding, one Telemachus, a monk, who had journeyed to Rome for that purpose, leaped into the arena and separated the combatants.

The people, in their lust for blood, overwhelmed him with stones and other missiles until he expired; but he had won the victory. A reaction set in the next day; the Church decreed him the honours of martyrdom, and, without a dissentient murmur, the human sacrifices of the amphitheatre were for ever abolished by the law.

Scarcely had Alaric departed, when another barbarian, Radagaisus, left the plains of the Vistula to destroy all that Alaric had spared.

After depopulating nearly all the towns of Northern Italy, he reached Florence, and while he was besieging that city was attacked by Stilicho at the head of the last army Italy possessed.

Fortune smiled once more upon the Roman arms, and the fierce Radagaisus, who had bound himself by a vow to reduce Rome to ashes, and to sacrifice her people to the deities they had forsaken, was forced to surrender, and was immediately beheaded.

The remnant of his army escaped through the Alpine passes, spreading desolation wherever they went. At length they crossed the Rhine, and reached Gaul on the



last day of the year 406. They exacted a fearful vengeance for their defeat in Italy, ravaging the fields, burning the cities, and slaying the priests at the very altars. The Archbishop of Rheims was martyred at the door of his cathedral. At Auxerre a new bishop was just consecrated. The day of his consecration was the day of his martyrdom, which he shared with many of his flock. The very air was polluted by unburied corpses.

At this unhappy moment a dark conspiracy was formed against Stilicho, the only man whose genius could preserve the empire, great although his faults had been.

A designing courtier, named Olympius, persuaded Honorius that Stilicho meditated his death as a step towards the possession of supreme power, and the emperor repaired to the camp at Pavia, where, surrounded by troops whose animosity to the unfortunate minister was deep, he sanctioned the massacre of the personal friends of his victim, thereby depriving the army of its most able leaders.

Stilicho might have saved himself had he taken up arms in self-defence; instead of which he came to Ravenna, and took refuge in the church, from which he was enticed by a promise of pardon, only to be beheaded before its gates. He met his death with a firmness not unworthy the last of the Romans, A.D. 408.

His death was speedily avenged. Alaric, hearing that the execution of Stilicho had been followed by the massacre of the Gothic hostages throughout Italy, after a brief hesitation crossed the Alps and the Po, and directed his rapid march towards Rome.

He encompassed its walls, cut off all its communications, and, after a most tedious siege, during which the unhappy inhabitants experienced the utmost horrors of famine, the senate, in the absence of the emperor, who was safe at Ravenna, sent to negotiate with their conqueror, whom they warned not to drive an innumerable multitude to desperation.

"The thicker the grass, the easier it is mown," replied Alaric, and demanded all the treasures of Rome. "What will you leave us?" replied the astonished ambassadors. "Your lives," was the stern reply.

Still, he somewhat abated the rigour of these terms, and with satisfied rapacity retired into Tuscany to winter.

The next year he again assumed the offensive, and a second siege took place in A.D. 409, which ended in the temporary sovereignty of one Attalus, whom he set up as the rival of Honorius, a puppet he soon displaced. But the third and memorable siege took place the following year. On the 23rd August, A.D. 410, he appeared before the gates. The senators prepared to make a desperate defence, but at the hour of midnight the gates were opened by the treachery of the slave population, eager to avenge the accumulated wrongs of ages, and the wretched inhabitants were aroused by the sound of the Gothic trumpets in their very streets.

Thus was Rome delivered to the savage fury of the barbarians, after nearly twelve centuries of military glory. Alaric, who was nominally a Christian, had bidden his troops to spare the unresisting, and to respect the sanctity of the churches. But it will easily be imagined that he

could ill control the passions of his soldiers in that hour of license, or restrain the private revenge of forty thousand slaves.

A cruel slaughter ensued, and for six days the city was delivered to fire and sword, while the Goths carried away all they could remove, and revelled at will in unaccustomed luxury. The woes Rome had inflicted upon a thousand cities were avenged at last.

Still, amidst the horrors of the siege, several of the Gothic Christians displayed the fervour of recent conversion, and the following incident is attested by S. Augustine, who vainly challenged his Pagan adversaries to produce a similar instance in which the Pagan deities had protected themselves or their votaries.

While the barbarians roamed the city in quest of prey, they forced open the dwelling of an aged virgin, whose life was devoted to the service of the altar. Demanding all the gold and silver she possessed, they were led by her into a chamber containing an array of the richest vessels, formed of the precious metals in question.

"These," said she, "are the consecrated vessels appertaining to S. Peter. If you dare to touch them, the guilt be on your own head. I have no power to keep or to defend them."

The Gothic leader, struck with awe, sent to Alaric for instructions how to act, and received orders to escort the sacred treasure, without damage or delay, to the church of S. Peter. From the extremity of the Quirinal hill to the distant quarter of the Vatican, a numerous array of Goths protected with their drawn swords the procession which

bore the sacred vessels to the shrine, and the chant of psalmody mingled with their warlike shouts. From all the adjacent houses a crowd of Christians hastened to join the procession, and a multitude of fortunate fugitives was thus enabled to escape imminent destruction, and to take refuge in the sanctuary of the Vatican.

But the churches and sanctuaries could only contain a limited portion of a population estimated at upwards of a million in the days of Honorius, and many of the hapless inhabitants experienced those horrors which invariably attend the capture of a city by storm. Besides the Christian Goths, there were large numbers of barbarian Huns in the ranks of Alaric, and no scruples would restrain them from their usual cruelties. Many of the finest buildings were destroyed, and the ruins of the palace of Sallust remained even in the days of Justinian a monument of the Gothic conflagration.

Many fugitives found shelter in the recesses of mountain or forest from the sword of the Goths; but a large number of the rich and prosperous contrived to escape to the hospitable province of Africa, then the most secure place of refuge, although soon itself to experience similar calamities.

On the sixth day the Goths evacuated Rome; but their retreat was not the effect of fear. Having taken all that they thought worth carrying away, they took their course southward, and lingered, like Hannibal, at Capua, the masters of the fairest regions of Europe, until their great leader, Alaric, died. They buried him in the bed of a small river, the Basentius, adorning his repose with many

trophies of their conquest, destroying the captive multitude by whose labour they had arrested the course of the stream, so that the spot of his sepulture might ever be unknown.

The awful catastrophe of the fall of Rome filled the astonished empire with grief and terror, conspicuous even amidst the many fearful catastrophes of that age. It seemed to many Christians that the end of the world was approaching, and that they were but realizing the fulfilment of the words of our Lord recorded by the earlier Evangelists, in the wars and rumours of wars, the tribulation and anguish around them. No place, no country, promised a secure refuge. The Picts, Scots, and Saxons ravaged Britain; the Franks, Alans, and Suevi, Gaul; the Goths, Spain; the Vandals threatened Africa, while the main body of the Goths, menaced East and West alike, and behind all these the dark cloud of the Huns was gathering, threatening to trample under foot victor Goth and vanquished Roman alike. It seemed as though the whole fabric of civilized society was breaking up, whether to be succeeded by a fairer civilization men knew not; it rather seemed that society was returning to barbarism.

The Pagans did not fail to make use of the calamities of the times as a striking argument in favour of their claims. They endeavoured to prove, and not without some show of justice, that in proportion as the Romans had forsaken the faith and worship of their ancestors they had been unfortunate in all their civil and military undertakings, until the national apostacy, as they might well term the great change under Theodosius, was avenged by

the utter collapse of the empire, and by the presence of the barbarians within the sacred walls of the city, once the undisputed mistress of the earth.

This argument was considered by S. Augustine to be worthy of elaborate refutation; and such refutation is the object of his great, perhaps his greatest, work, "*De Civitate Dei*," in which the whole subject is discussed with exceeding eloquence and wisdom.

But may we not, looking back from these remote days, consider that the work of imperial Rome was done, her mission accomplished? She had received the civilization and learning of Greece, and transmitted it throughout her vast dominions. She had united the nations in political union, which had prepared the way for the diffusion of the Gospel, by obliterating the distinction between the different races of the earth, uniting them under similar civil and military institutions, and giving them a common language, at least so far as the educated were concerned. Thus under her shadow the Faith of Christ had arisen in the world; had spread its power as that of the state lessened; enlarged its borders as the empire contracted hers; and was now prepared to succeed that empire, which had but furnished an outward centre of unity, by supplying a far stronger bond of union in that principle of universal brotherhood which is of the essence of Christianity, although so often forgotten by its professors.

Again, it is but too painfully evident, that without some violent change the grievous abuses which mankind inherited from Pagan legislation, and which had become part and parcel of Roman law, could not be wholly swept away.

The criminal jurisprudence which pressed so hardly upon the slave or the poor was almost unaltered, and however much the administration of a Theodosius might soften the rigour of a system which recognized examination under torture as necessary to the validity of the evidence of a slave, yet it is evident that under monarchs like Valentinian or Valens the condition of the subject was nearly as bad as under a Severus or Diocletian, not to say a Nero or a Domitian.

For no beneficial purpose therefore could her dominion be prolonged. Her work was accomplished, and a thorough re-organization of society was needed. The new wine of the Gospel had to be poured into new bottles.

It is instructive to note the calm confidence with which Augustine, now sole Bishop of Hippo, is enabled to commit himself and his beloved flock to the mercy and protection of God, and to compare such confidence with the despairing utterances of a Cicero, when the old republic was breaking up before the advancing despotism five centuries earlier. To the Pagan patriot all seemed lost; total darkness closed the view. To the Christian the whole future seemed bright with heavenly light, sure that, dark although the clouds might be, yet there was eternal sunshine beyond, and that the trials of earth were but the appointed path to a land of perfect peace and endless joy.

## CHAPTER XX.

### FROM THE ACCESSION OF ARCADIUS TO THE DEATH OF S. AUGUSTINE.

A.D. 408-430.

ONE year after the death of S. Chrysostom, Arcadius, the son of the great Theodosius, under whose government the saintly bishop had suffered such undeserved affliction, passed to his last account, leaving behind him an only son, Theodosius, yet an infant of eight years, as his successor in the imperial dignity, and three daughters, Pulcheria, Arcadia, and Marina.

Pulcheria, although only fifteen years of age, was gifted with great wisdom and earnest piety. She took charge of the education of her brother, and carefully sheltered him from evil influences.

Yet it must be owned, as Fleury observes, that the type his piety assumed was rather superstitious than manly. An insolent monk, for instance, once excommunicated him because he refused to grant an unreasonable petition, and the emperor would neither eat nor drink till the monk was induced to withdraw his anathema, although the bishop assured him such an excommunication might be safely disregarded.

From motives of religion, Pulcheria determined to em-



brace a life of celibacy, and succeeded in persuading her sisters to follow her example.

In the presence of the clergy and laity of Constantinople, the three daughters of Arcadius dedicated their virginity to God, and their vow was duly recorded on a tablet of gold, which they publicly offered in the great church of "The Apostles." From this period the imperial palace assumed the aspect of a convent. Their simple diet was interrupted by frequent fasts, and, renouncing all the enjoyments of their station, their leisure hours were given to devotion.

At the age of sixteen, Pulcheria received the title of Augusta, and continued to be the real ruler of the Eastern Empire for the space of forty years, both during the long minority of her brother by virtue of her influence over him, and after his death, in the name of her husband, Marcian.

She never swerved from the path of holiness she had chosen; yet, says Gibbon, "her devotion never diverted her indefatigable attention from temporal affairs, and she alone, among all the descendants of the great Theodosius, appears to have inherited any share of his manly spirit and abilities." Her deliberations were maturely weighed; her actions prompt and decisive; and while the unfortunate inhabitants of the West were suffering the extreme evils of foreign and civil war, those of the East enjoyed a long tranquillity, so that Theodosius was never reduced to the necessity of encountering or punishing a rebellious subject, and the blessing of Providence appeared to rest on his dominions.

Synesius, the philosopher-bishop, merits some passing mention here. He was a native of Cyrene, of Greek descent, fond of field sports, heterodox in his views, and not even a catechumen when the people of Ptolemais selected him for their bishop. He was ordained by Theophilus of Alexandria, notwithstanding his great reluctance and a protest, in which he declared that he would not follow the example of other bishops in separating himself from his wife, and that he could not fully receive the doctrines of the judgment-day or the resurrection. But his charity and natural goodness so endeared him to the people, that these fundamental errors were overlooked, and in days of the deepest distress he merited the love of his flock by his absolute self-devotion, while his objections to the orthodox Faith seemed completely overcome. His noble and daring excommunication of Andronicus, who had usurped the government of Pentapolis, must not be forgotten. This inhuman wretch employed all his leisure hours in devising instruments of torture, which he applied so freely that the so-called courts of justice only echoed with the groans of the sufferers. The people, in their distress, had recourse to Synesius; but Andronicus mocked at their appeal, and caused his inhuman orders to be posted up at the very church doors, saying, "It is in vain you hope in the Church; none shall deliver you out of the hands of Andronicus," adding terrible blasphemies.

Thereupon Synesius passed a sentence of excommunication upon the governor and all his followers, forbidding the Faithful to eat or drink with them, and the clergy to give them aid even in the hour of death. Andronicus

was terrified at this, and promised repentance. He was absolved, but returned again to his evil ways until the heavy Hand of God fell upon him, and he was deprived of his office, and sentenced to death for his crimes—a sentence which was not carried out, owing to the intercession of Synesius, who begged that he might be spared to repent of his sins. The unhappy criminal was permitted to pass the remainder of his life in obscurity and, let us hope, in penitence.

Theophilus, the proud and turbulent patriarch of Alexandria, died in October, A.D. 412, having ruled the see for twenty-seven years. In his dying moments he exclaimed, "Happy art thou, O Abbot Arsenius, in that thou hast ever had this hour before thine eyes."

He was succeeded by his nephew, the well known S. Cyril of Alexandria, a man whose character has been very differently painted by friends and by foes. In the home of his uncle he had acquired a burning zeal for orthodoxy, with, perhaps, too great a yearning for spiritual dominion.

Five years of his early life were passed in ceaseless study amongst the monks of Nitria, under the tuition of the Abbot Serapion, and the results of his studies still survive in the seven huge folios which contain his works.

Recalled by Theophilus to the world, he rapidly acquired the fame of a popular preacher. Comely in person, with a voice of rich harmony, and fertile in illustration, he rose rapidly into power, such power as eloquence ever conferred amongst people of Greek extraction.

When his uncle died he became, willingly or unwillingly, a candidate for the vacant dignity. The clergy were

divided, the military hostile, but a resistless multitude of the general laity, with unanimous voice and hands, overwhelmed opposition, and seated him on the throne which the great Athanasius had filled forty years before.

The power of the patriarch of Alexandria was immense; the public and private charities were directed by him, his commands were blindly obeyed and enforced by the ranks of the *parabolani*, accustomed to danger by their daily intercourse with the dying, or offices for the dead, and even the prefects of Egypt were overshadowed by the dignity of the prelates of the capital.

First Cyril prohibited the worship of the Novatians, and, gratified by success, turned his attention to the Jews, who, forty thousand in number, possessed the chief wealth of the city. They had procured the unjust disgrace and death of one Hierax, a well-known adherent of the archbishop, and when Cyril complained and threatened them with punishment, had retorted by raising the cry at midnight that one of the largest churches was on fire, in order that they might massacre the Christians, as they rushed from their beds to extinguish the supposed conflagration, in which enterprise the Jews were but too successful.

No justice, Cyril felt, could be expected from Orestes, the prefect; and, mustering the *parabolani* and their followers, he attacked the Jews' quarter, levelled their synagogues with the ground, and expelled the inhabitants from the city, appropriating their property, after a bloodless victory, as lawful spoil.

In those days when "there was no king in Israel" this high-handed assertion of justice, if it may be so termed,

met with no retaliation from the government. Orestes, however, complained, and his chariot was assaulted in the streets by five hundred Nitrian monks, one of whom inflicted a ghastly wound on his face with a stone. The monk was seized, and expired under tortures. Cyril obtained the body, carried it in solemn procession to the cathedral, named the victim "Thaumasius the Wonderful," and caused him to be venerated as a martyr; a proceeding of which he afterwards repented.

There was then living at Alexandria a well-known Greek lady named Hypatia, a correspondent of Synesius, but one who was blindly devoted to the Pagan worship, and who by her beauty, her philosophy, and her eloquence had fascinated many Christians.

Teaching the philosophy of Plato and Aristotle, she refused all solicitations to marriage, and, spotless in life, instructed her disciples. Persons of the highest rank were impatient to visit the female philosopher, and gorgeous trains of slaves and horses waited daily before the door of her academy.

In these most unhappy days the rage for persecution seems to have fallen from the Pagans, who once filled Alexandria with the blood of the martyrs, upon their triumphant successors; and, sad to relate, the unhappy Hypatia, shortly after the scenes described, became suspected, not without much apparent reason, of conspiring with Orestes against Cyril, was torn from her chariot one fatal day in Lent, dragged to the church, and there most cruelly murdered, it is said (let us hope untruly) scraped to death with oyster shells.

Cyril had no part in this cruel iniquity ; but it has left an indelible stain upon his memory, since he had excited the passions which led to so sad a result.

Pope Innocent died in March, A.D. 417, and was succeeded by a Greek named Zosimus. It had been Innocent's most earnest wish to vindicate the memory of S. Chrysostom at Constantinople, and to cause his name to be inserted on the "diptychs." This he had not been able to accomplish during his life ; but, soon after his death, Atticus, the patriarch of Constantinople, yielded to the popular desire, and inserted the name as one proper for Eucharistic commemoration.

Cyril was exceedingly displeased, as this seemed to reflect upon the character of his late uncle, Theophilus, who, it will be remembered, had been instrumental in the condemnation of S. Chrysostom ; and he called upon Atticus to expunge the obnoxious name from the diptychs of his church, or to forfeit communion with Alexandria.

A breach of communion seemed indeed unavoidable ; but it was happily prevented by Isidore of Pelusium, who succeeded in removing the objections of Cyril, and thus preserved the peace of the Church, while justice was fully done to the memory of S. Chrysostom.

The history of the Donatists again demands our attention. They had existed nearly a century since the earlier struggles which we have previously described. Persecuted by Constantius, they had been favoured by Julian. When in power they displayed the utmost intolerance and unendurable pride ; and, consequently, when the tide turned,

and the death of Julian deprived them of their Pagan protector, they became again the objects of persecution.

Gratian confiscated all their churches and ecclesiastical buildings, giving them all to the Catholic Church, and decreed that any other buildings, which they should in future profane by their worship, should become the property of the state. But such partial persecution only rendered them the more desperate, and during the subsequent revolt of Gildo they revenged themselves by committing every imaginable outrage upon the Catholics, so that it became exceedingly dangerous for their victims to leave the security of fortified towns.

Meanwhile they manifested the natural tendency of dissent to subdivision, and divided into smaller sects, each maintaining itself to be the whole Church. Thus they filled Carthage with confusion, and set at nought every principle upon which they had originally separated from the Church.

S. Augustine will ever be known as the great adversary of the Donatists.

Their distinguishing features of doctrine consisted (1) in the denial of the co-existence of evil with good in the visible Church, upon the strength of which, claiming for themselves the possession of perfect purity, they anathematized the Church; (2) in the denial of the validity of baptism administered without the true Church, which they considered confined to their own body; (3) in maintaining that the whole Church might be comprised in an obscure community, and was not by God's ordinance necessarily comprehensive, or the teacher of all nations.

: In a psalm, or poem of twenty parts, S. Augustine sketched the history of the schism, and refuted their doctrines for the benefit of the uneducated; while he wrote treatise after treatise, in answer to their more learned champions, and letter after letter, written in a spirit of genuine courtesy and Christian charity. Often he endeavoured to bring them to conferences; but they refused, sometimes alleging that his well-known rhetorical skill would give him an unfair advantage, sometimes that "the children of the martyrs could not mingle with sinners lest they should learn their works." It was still dangerous for Catholics to live in retired situations, or to travel unguarded. Once S. Augustine himself narrowly escaped a plot they had formed to waylay him, and other bishops were less fortunate.

These outrages being reported to Honorius, the old edicts were revived against them, and surely, if persecution could ever be justified as S. Augustine justifies this one, it would be in a case such as this, where assassination or violence appeared to be sanctioned by the moral code of the persecuted.

But the Catholics earnestly desired first to exhaust all gentler modes of persuasion, and, at their request, Honorius caused a conference to be held at Carthage, under the presidency of the imperial commissioner, Marcellinus, compelling the Donatists to attend.

Two hundred and eighty-six Catholic bishops, including S. Augustine and his friend Alypius, met two hundred and seventy-nine Donatist bishops in the month of June, A.D. 411.



The Catholics promised absolute submission in the case of their being vanquished in argument, merely requiring the Donatists to promise that they would consent to union on equal terms if they were themselves conquered.

The conference lasted three days, during which the Donatists had recourse to numberless evasions, and were most arrogant in their behaviour, keeping the council standing all the time, because they would not, they said, "sit among the ungodly." After a most patient hearing they were utterly defeated, judgment was given against them, and the government required them to unite with the Catholics, and provide for the joint government of the churches.

Failing such submission within a given time, the government, represented by Marcellinus, notified that the penal statutes against Donatism would be executed.

Of course this did not satisfy the Donatists. They asserted that the Catholics had bribed the imperial commissioner, and appealed to Honorius in person, but in vain. The penal edicts were put in force against all such as remained obstinate. In consequence of this many Donatists were driven into conformity, but others were driven to desperation, and committed the most violent outrages upon the Catholics. Many committed suicide, which their religion actually justified; but the excitement passed away, the sect had received its death-blow, and never held up its head again. In a few years it had ceased to engage the attention of the Church—one of the few instances in which persecution has gained its end.

The Pelagian controversy was a far more serious one,

bearing as it did upon the whole question of the relation of God to man—of the sovereignty of God, and the free-will of the creature.

Pelagius, whose Celtic name was Morgan, was a native of Britain, and the first inhabitant of these islands who distinguished himself (although unhappily) in theology.

He is supposed to have been educated at the monastery of Bangor; but he did not choose his native land for the propagation of his heretical tenets. At the commencement of this century he took up his abode at Rome, where, in union with Cælestius, a native of Ireland, he became famous for his heterodoxy, although previously esteemed for his blameless life and conversation. These monks looked upon the popular doctrines of original sin, the corruption of the human nature, the necessity of Divine grace, as prejudicial to manly virtue, and as tending to reconcile man to submit to evil tendencies, from which, by a vigorous use of his own natural powers, he might extricate himself. In opposition to the faith of the Church, they, therefore, maintained—

- (1.) That Adam was created subject to death.
- (2.) That his sin only injured himself, not his posterity.
- (3.) That infants are born in the same relation to God as that in which Adam was born.
- (4.) That as men did not die in Adam, neither are they made alive in Christ.
- (5.) That the law of Moses gave eternal life through its own power, even as the gospel now.
- (6.) That men might of their own unaided strength attain perfect holiness.

(7.) That infants attain eternal life whether baptized or otherwise, being born without sin.

Upon the approach of the Goths, A.D. 410, the two friends retired first into Sicily, and thence into Africa, where they published their heresy far and wide. From Africa, Pelagius travelled to Palestine, while Cælestius remained at Carthage, where he hoped to be ordained.

But the discovery of his opinions, which he had attempted to conceal, blasted his hopes; and, his errors being condemned at the council held at Carthage, A.D. 412, he departed from that city, and followed his friend Pelagius.

S. Augustine had not been present at this council, neither was he amongst the first to take up the controversy; but the tribune, Marcellinus, being much perplexed, requested his opinions on the subject, whereupon he wrote two books, in which he encounters all the positions of the Pelagians, particularly maintaining that the sin of Adam poisoned the fount of human life at its source, and that Baptism is, therefore, administered to children that they may receive remission of original sin.

Meanwhile Pelagius, reaching the Holy Land, had found a fierce opponent in Jerome, who not only opposed his doctrines, but maligned his private character, although S. Augustine always spoke in the highest terms of the personal morality of his opponent. In July, A.D. 415, Orosius, a young Spanish priest, newly arrived from Africa, charged Pelagius with heresy before John, Bishop of Jerusalem, and a local synod, citing the proceedings at Carthage, and reading a letter from S. Augustine.

"What is Augustine to me?" said Pelagius. "You ought to be excommunicated," was the reply, "for speaking disrespectfully of the great prop of African unity."

By using the word "*grace*" in an equivocal sense, he escaped condemnation on that occasion—the more easily since the accuser could not speak Greek, and the synod did not understand Latin, while Pelagius was an accomplished linguist. But at the close of the year, Pelagius, accused by two Gallic bishops, was, somewhat to his surprise, yet again summoned to a synod at Diospolis, the ancient Lydda. Once more he escaped, although his doctrines were condemned, and, elated by success, boasted of his acquittal as though those doctrines had been pronounced orthodox.

Zosimus, who had now succeeded Innocent in the see of Rome, was seduced to take the part of the heretics. He reproved the Africans, censured the accusers, and summoned them to appear at Rome. But the African bishops, like Cyprian of old, asserted their independence, and justified their decision, telling Zosimus that he had been too credulous.

And now the dispute had assumed such proportions as to attract the attention of the civil power. Honorius ordered that Pelagius and Cælestius should be expelled from Rome if they presumed to enter it; and that their adherents, if convicted, should suffer banishment by sentence of the magistrates.

Thus pressed, Zosimus changed his tone, adopted the African decisions, and required his suffragans to join in

the condemnation of Pelagius. Nineteen refused, and were in consequence expelled from their sees; the most noted of whom was Julian, bishop of Eclana, a small town near Beneventum.

The Pelagians in vain appealed to a general council, although assisted by the impetuous eloquence of Julian, who charged the Catholics with Manichæism, and in spite also of countless appeals to all the great sees to acknowledge their orthodoxy. Both ecclesiastical and civil judgments were issued against them, and they withered away like the Donatists, until Pelagius disappears from history, about the year 418; and his doctrines were afterwards condemned by the general council of Ephesus, in the year 431.

In short, Africans, Gauls, and Britons, by their councils, and the emperors by their penal edicts, demolished this sect in its infancy, and it withered away as a branch severed from the true vine.

But it is to be regretted that these unhappy disputes about the doctrines of Pelagius gave rise to other controversies equally prejudicial to the peace of the Church. In the course of the Pelagian controversy, S. Augustine had delivered, or rather formed, those opinions concerning predestination, which afterwards gave rise to the sects of the Jansenists amongst Catholics, and the Calvinists amongst Protestants.

He taught that all men being equally guilty before God, it had pleased Him to predestinate the elect to eternal salvation, passing by others. Although he taught, as a matter of course, that all were alike regenerated in

baptism, yet he maintained that the gift of final perseverance was for the elect alone.

The monks of Adrumetum exaggerated this doctrine, maintaining that God not only predestinated the wicked to eternal punishment, but also to the sin and guilt for which they were punished, thus making God the Author of sin. Augustine contended vigorously against this later development, which was publicly rejected and condemned at the councils of Arles and Lyons.

The pressure of the Pelagian arguments had driven S. Augustine into these doctrines concerning absolute predestination and irresistible grace, which, like the modern Jansenists, and unlike the modern Calvinists, he held in conjunction with the fullest belief in the sacramental system of the Church.

A new modification of the teaching of S. Augustine was given to the world by the monk Cassian, who had founded a monastery near Marseilles. Many, like himself, were endeavouring to find a mean between the errors of Pelagianism and the fatalism involved in Augustine's later teaching, and they thus gained the name of "*Semi-Pelagians*."

Their doctrines may be thus summed up :

(1.) That God willed the salvation of all men, and that all were included in the atonement wrought by Christ.

(2.) That grace was freely offered to all, and that man, being endowed with free will, was consequently capable of choosing good or evil—of accepting or resisting grace.

(3.) That man, before receiving grace, was capable of faith and repentance, but that grace was necessary to perseverance.

The doctrines of Cassian were so suited to the general conception of Christians that they made rapid progress, and were received in the greatest part of the monastic schools, while they were fully in accordance with the prevailing tone of thought in the East.

Still this was the commencement of the unhappy contest which still exists in the Church—a controversy transferred from the schools of ancient philosophers to the domain of Christian theology,—“Was man a free agent, or the mere creature of fate?”

In the year 419, Pope Zosimus died, and was succeeded by Boniface; and the following year the great S. Jerome breathed his last, on the 30th of September, in the ninety-first year of his age. His services to the Church, by his labours in the field of Biblical criticism, and the value of many of his treatises, have caused his name to be held in very high honour; but the savage fierceness of his controversial writings mars their usefulness. The latter years of his life were spent in deep retirement at Bethlehem, from which he only emerged by means of his writings. His greatest work, tested by its influence upon future ages, was his translation of the Scriptures from the Hebrew to the Latin—a translation which, forming the basis of the Vulgate, has been universally received in the Latin Church.

After an inglorious reign, during which he was little more than the nominal emperor of the West, Honorius, departed to render an account of his stewardship in the year 423.

His sister, Placidia, the widow of Adolphus the Goth, who had been basely assassinated, had become, on her return to Italy, the wife of a victorious general named Constantine, and the mother of Valentinian the Third.

But it was not until one John, the leader of an unsuccessful rebellion, had been subdued, that Valentinian received the title of Augustus, in the sixth year of his age, when Placidia assumed the government in the name of her son, and retained it for twenty-five years. (A.D. 423-448.)

Amidst the decay of the military glory of Rome, her armies were commanded by two generals, Ætius and Boniface, who may be deservedly named the last of the Romans. Their union might have supported the sinking state; their discord was the cause of the loss of Africa, which had now to bear its full portion in the calamities of the age. Ætius has been immortalized by his great victory over Attila, which we shall have hereafter to describe; Boniface, less known to fame, was a general of singular courage and success, who was the terror of the barbarians, and whose Christian piety merited the well-earned commendations of S. Augustine.

In the season of danger and distress he had supported the cause of Placidia with zeal and fidelity; and, while Ætius had favoured the rebellion against the young Valentinian, Boniface, by the troops and treasures of Africa, had essentially contributed to extinguish it.

Yet Ætius, reconciled to Placidia, and living close at hand, so that he could besiege the palace of Ravenna, by flattery succeeded in poisoning her mind against the more



faithful servant; and while he persuaded her to recall Boniface from the government of Africa, he secretly advised him to disobey the summons, as one which was really equivalent to a sentence of death.

Boniface refused to obey, and Ætius represented the refusal as criminal; and when the former took up arms in self-defence, Ætius took the credit of having foretold the *rebellion*.

Unable to protect himself from such an adversary as Ætius, at the head of the forces of the West, Boniface invited the alliance of the Vandals; and under their king, the terrible Genseric, they crossed the Straits of Gibraltar fifty thousand in number. They were at once joined by the Moors, whom the Romans had dispossessed, and the Donatists, who eagerly caught at the opportunity of revenging their real or imaginary wrongs upon the Catholics.

Meanwhile an explanation had been arranged between the friends of Placidia and those of Boniface, and the double-dealing of Ætius discovered. Placidia and Boniface lamented their fatal error, and the latter testified his sincerity by placing his person within the power of his sovereign; but it was too late to save Africa. The Vandals, disdaining all offers of peace, overwhelmed the fertile provinces from Tangier to Tripoli. The country was exceedingly populous, and so fruitful that it deserved the name of the common granary of Rome and Europe. They found it as the Garden of Eden, they left it a desolate wilderness. Seldom or never giving quarter, they devastated city after city with fire and sword; while, by

every species of indignity and torture, they forced the wretched inhabitants to discover their hidden wealth.

But a darker character was given to this invasion by the fact that the Vandals were professed Arians, and, in union with the Donatists, inaugurated a cruel persecution of the Catholics. A deputation of the clergy ventured into the presence of Genseric, and entreated that, although deprived of their churches, they might still minister to their suffering flocks; but he replied that he did not wish to leave a Catholic alive, and threatened to throw them into the sea—a threat he was hardly restrained from fulfilling. Two bishops suffered a martyrdom of agony, being roasted on plates of hot iron; and many of the Faithful glorified God by their noble endurance. It seemed as if the old days of persecution had returned in their full vigour.

Boniface was in deep distress at the sad consequences of his rashness. The Vandals derided his appeals for peace. He took the field against them in person, but was defeated, and forced to shut himself up in Hippo with the broken remains of his army.

Amidst these dark clouds the noble life of S. Augustine drew to its close. Unremitting in his labours, he was the stay and comfort of the city during the terrible siege which ensued; and the military labours of the unhappy Boniface in the defence of the city were relieved by the spiritual consolations he received from the holy bishop. But in the third month of the siege, S. Augustine sank beneath the weight of labour and anxiety, increased as his pastoral cares had been by the multitude of fugitives who crowded

the city, while the country was given to fire and sword. At last he was confined to his bed, and his strength sank as a lamp expires from want of oil. Saying that a Christian should never depart this life, save as a penitent, he caused the penitential psalms to be hung up over his bed, and recited them with many tears.

He gently breathed his last on the 20th of August, A.D. 430, amidst the prayers and tears of his afflicted flock, in the seventy-seventh year of his age.

The sequel of the story of Hippo may soon be related. For fourteen months, the besieged sustained the assaults of the Vandals; the sea was open to them, and the desert they had themselves created around the walls forced the Vandals to retire for a time.

A reinforcement arrived to the aid of Boniface from Italy and Constantinople, and with the military force of East and West united, he hastened to attack the invaders. But the total loss of a second battle decided the fate of Africa. Boniface and his soldiers embarked with the precipitation of despair; the people of Hippo were offered the same means of escape, and embarked with their families and effects, occupying the vacant places of the soldiers, the majority of whom were left on the field.

After their departure, the city was burnt by the Vandals, but the library containing the voluminous writings of its sainted bishop was fortunately spared to posterity.

## CHAPTER XXI.

### THE COUNCIL OF EPHESUS AND THE NESTORIAN CONTROVERSY.

**E**ARLY in the year 428, the see of Constantinople became vacant by the death of Sisinnius. A contest arose between rival candidates, which was terminated, as on a former occasion, by the election of a presbyter from Antioch, who possessed the advantage of belonging to neither of the local factions. Nestorius, upon whom the vacant dignity was bestowed, a native of Syria, was educated at Antioch, where he was baptized in his infancy. As usual, he had spent some time in monastic seclusion before his ordination, and had been subsequently ordained priest by the Bishop Theodotus. He possessed fluent speech, and by the paleness of his face, his sombre dress, and his love of retirement, had gained that reputation for sanctity which recommended him to the post which his predecessor, S. Chrysostom, for whom he professed great admiration, had been similarly called to fill.

Summoned to Constantinople, he took with him a priest named Anastatius, in whom he had great confidence, and on their way they visited Theodore of Mopsuestia, from whom it was supposed Nestorius had imbibed the heresy he afterwards developed.

In his first sermon in the cathedral he thus addressed the emperor, who was present: "Give me, O emperor, the earth purged from heresy, and I will repay you with heaven. Aid me to conquer the heretics, and I will aid you to overcome the Persians."

These presumptuous words afford some key to the character of the new bishop, although they were not unpleasing to a populace violently exasperated against the sectarians and heretics.

Following up the spirit of this declaration, he commenced his career by a crusade against the Arians of the capital. He attempted to deprive them of the church where they used to worship in secret; but refusing to surrender the building, in their despair they set it on fire. The flames spread to the neighbouring houses, a great conflagration ensued, and Nestorius was ever after known as "The Incendiary."

Prohibited by the court from attacking the Novatians, who differed from the Catholics only upon the question of the restoration of those who had committed deadly sin after baptism, he persecuted the inoffensive Quarto-decimans—who still persevered in keeping Easter after the old eastern computation—even to the death. Neither did the Macedonians, who were unsound with regard to the Divinity of the Holy Ghost, escape his intolerant orthodoxy.

A law is still extant, enacted by Theodosius after the sermon in the cathedral, which enumerates twenty-three degrees in the guilt and punishment of heresy.

The Novatians are simply forbidden to make further

innovations; the Arians, Macedonians, and Apollinarians, to meet for worship within any city; the Eunomians, the Valentinians, Montanists, Donatists, and several other sects, to meet for prayer within the bounds of the empire; and lastly the Manichæans, the most evil of all sects, are to be banished from the cities, and even delivered over to capital punishment.

But the sword of persecution, so furiously wielded, was about to recoil upon Nestorius himself. There had long been two opposite tendencies in the theological teaching of Alexandria and Antioch, which threatened at this period a breach of communion.

The heresy of Apollinarius, who denied that our Lord possessed a human soul, and maintained that His Divinity was to Him in its place, which originated in the previous century, had been violently opposed at Antioch, and by no one so fiercely as Nestorius.

In their detestation of this heresy, and their abhorrence of such confusion of thought or such ambiguous expressions as might lead to the inference that God and Man were One Christ by confusion of substance, they were led to use expressions which obviously suggested the opposite heresy of "dividing the Person."

On the other hand, the traditional hatred of Arianism, which Alexandria had inherited from the great Athanasius, had led to a very similar abhorrence of any ambiguous language which might lead to the inference that there were not simply two Natures, but two *Persons*, united in the Redeemer.

Under these opposite tendencies language was accepted

as perfectly orthodox, in one patriarchate, which would have caused men to stop their ears in the other ; and these opposing modes of thought were destined to come into fierce collision, not at Antioch or Alexandria, but on the neutral ground of Constantinople, and, alas ! to be embittered by many personal motives arising from the rivalry between the two great *sees*. The representative of the one school of thought, that of Antioch, was Nestorius, now patriarch of Constantinople ; of the other, our old acquaintance Cyril, patriarch of Alexandria, and there is much reason to fear that theological animosity was heightened in each case by personal ambition.

The immediate cause of the outbreak of the controversy was a sermon of Anastatius, who, preaching in the patriarch's presence from the pulpit of the cathedral, exclaimed against the use of the term "*Theotokos*," or "Mother of God," as applied to the Blessed Virgin—a term justified by the use of Eusebius, Athanasius, the two Gregories, and Augustine. In the course of his sermon he added that Mary did not bring forth God, but only a man who was the organ of Deity ; yet that he adored the "vesture" of flesh for the sake of Him who wore it—Him who appeared outwardly, for the sake of the concealed Deity. Nestorius, observing the sensation caused by this, supported the preacher in a whole course of sermons, the first being preached on Christmas Day, A.D. 428, in which he spoke of Mary's Son as a mere man, the organ employed, the vesture worn by God ; nevertheless asserting that honour was due to the Sacred Humanity in the words, "For the sake of the Employer I honour the

vesture He uses ;" and again we call Christ God "because of His connection with God ;" and again, "God the Word dwelt in Mary's Son."

It is evident that, according to this teaching, there was no real incarnation, that God the Word was not made Flesh, but dwelt in flesh, much as God indwells in saint or prophet, although in a higher degree. This is evident from a subsequent remark of Nestorius when at Ephesus — "I cannot give the name of God to a child two or three months old," an expression which forcibly reminds one of the blasphemies of Cerinthus, who maintained the supernatural union of a Man and a God, while asserting that the God forsook the Man before his sufferings.

The excitement at Constantinople became greater and greater. Men stood up in the cathedral and contradicted the preacher, congregations renounced his authority, the whole empire took up the controversy, and while his opponents said Nestorius ought to be thrown into the sea, he himself made liberal use of the temporal power to inflict scourges and banishment upon his opponents.

At last his great rival, Cyril, was drawn into the controversy. Copies of the sermons preached by Nestorius were circulated in the Alexandrian patriarchate, and many of his people were abandoning the use of the term "Theotokos." He at once denounced the heresy, and entered into a warm controversy with Nestorius, while at the same time he wrote to encourage the malcontents in Constantinople.

Both the disputants appealed at this stage of the controversy to Cælestine, Bishop of Rome, while Cyril also



wrote to influence the imperial court, addressing one treatise to the emperor, another to Pulcheria.

Cælestine weighed the merits of the case at the head of a synod of Italian clergy; he approved the creed of Cyril, condemned the sentiments of Nestorius, and announced to him, that unless he would conform to the teaching of Rome and Alexandria within ten days, he should be deposed and excommunicated. Committing to Cyril, as his plenipotentiary, the execution of this illegal, although not unjust, decision, he wrote to John of Antioch and to the malcontents of Constantinople, announcing his determination.

But neither the emperor Theodosius nor the patriarch Nestorius were disposed to accept the mandate of Rome. A council of the Church was unanimously demanded as the sole sufficient authority to decide the question, and at the request of Nestorius, Theodosius and Valentinian III. united in summoning such a council to meet at *Ephesus* on the day of Pentecost.

In the meantime Cyril had required Nestorius to subscribe *twelve anathemas*, and the latter had replied by a similar number, which he required his opponent to subscribe. This produced great commotion, and the Nestorians demanded the condemnation of Cyril's anathemas as Apollinarian, the whole question being referred to the council.

The metropolitans throughout the world were summoned, and S. Augustine alone of bishops beneath that degree, of whose recent death the emperor had not yet heard. His loss was a very grave one at that moment, when he

might have moderated the angry passions of the rival parties.

On Whitsuntide, A.D. 431, the members of the council assembled. Cyril was there with fifty suffragans, and, alas ! with a large train of sailors and disorderly followers. Memnon of Ephesus ranged forty bishops under his banner; the African Church was prevented by the Vandal invasion from sending any representatives; two bishops and a priest were deputed by Cælestine to represent Rome and the whole of the West. A synod had previously, as we have seen, discussed the question in Italy.

Nestorius appeared rather as a judge than as a criminal. He depended upon the fleshly arm more than the justice of his cause, and his sturdy slaves were armed alike for attack or defence. Candidian, the count of the domestics, was charged by the emperor to preserve the peace, and confine the bishops to the city of Ephesus until they should have settled the question. His task was by no means an easy one, so sadly were passions aroused, and he commenced by commanding all monks and laymen who were strangers to leave the city, a command which was but slightly obeyed.

But although two hundred bishops had assembled, John of Antioch had not yet appeared. The state of the roads, flooded by heavy rains, had delayed his journey, and while his colleagues waited for him sharp dissensions took place. Nestorius complained that his very life was threatened by the mariners, slaves, and fanatics, who, in spite of Candidian, had followed Cyril to Ephesus; and Cyril retorted by similar accusations against the military guard which attended Nestorius.

Meanwhile Cyril's zeal and liberality were daily extending his influence, and Nestorius impatiently expected the arrival of John of Antioch, upon whose assistance he firmly reckoned. That bishop was now but five or six days from Ephesus, and wrote in advance a letter to Cyril, which he despatched by swift messengers, filled with professions of friendship and confidence. He stated that he had suffered greatly on the journey, that he had been travelling thirty days without cessation, that they had lost many horses, and some bishops had fallen ill on the road. He asked the prayers of Cyril, and concluded by stating that he hoped to arrive with his train of bishops within six days. Shortly after two bishops of his party arrived, and stated that John had sent a message by them to the effect, that if his arrival should be delayed, he wished the council to proceed to business.

Two hundred bishops had already assembled, and fifteen days had passed from the day fixed by Theodosius for the opening of the council; but John had not *yet* arrived, and many were of opinion that he lingered from a reluctance to condemn his friend and countryman.

Under these circumstances Cyril yielded to his impatience, and without tarrying for the expiration of the five or six days John had named, formally opened the council on the twenty-second of June, assuming the office of president in virtue of the dignity of his see, and the letter of Cælestine.

This measure was most deeply to be regretted. In a matter of such vast importance, it was most desirable that there should be no appearance of haste or unfairness; but

the excuses were urged, that the bishops were weary of waiting; that illness, and even death, had made their appearance amongst them; that the summer was intensely hot, and they were confined to the city; that they were impatient to return to their flocks, the episcopal ministrations being necessarily suspended in each diocese; that John was purposely lingering, as before stated, from an aversion to join in that condemnation of Nestorius which was already eagerly anticipated.

One of the holiest bishops present was Theodoret of Cyrus, a city in Syria. He was born in the year 387, of noble parents. His mother, who had been barren like Hannah, believed that she had received in him a Samuel in answer to fervent prayer, and dedicated him to God from his cradle. He was ordained reader at Antioch when very young, and there contracted an intimacy with Nestorius. He was ordained bishop in the year 423, and his ministrations were so blessed of God, that he converted all the heretics in his diocese, baptizing ten thousand into the Church, in eight towns only.

This intrepid prelate, who had many times exposed his life to danger for the cause of the Church in his zeal against heresy, in company with sixty-seven other bishops, protested in vain against this unseemly haste, and Candidian as vainly, in the emperor's name, joined in the protest.

Therefore the council was opened. One hundred and ninety-eight bishops took their seats in the church of the Theotokos, the book of the Gospels was placed in the midst, and Cyril, as the representative of Rome and Alexandria, presided over the assembly.

Three citations were addressed to Nestorius, but he refused to appear, and the soldiers who acted as his guard beat the messengers, and sent them away shamefully handled.

In his absence the council proceeded to business. The whole of the momentous transaction was crowded into the limit of a long summer's day. The result was obvious. The heresy of Nestorius was condemned, without one dissenting voice. A sentence of deposition was pronounced in the name of the Lord, whom he had blasphemed, which was addressed to him under the title of "The New Judas."

Late in the summer evening, the result of the deliberations was proclaimed to the anxious multitude who waited without. Acclamations burst forth, which seemed to shake the ground, widely different in character from those which had been heard in the same city in the days of the craftsman Demetrius, but equally loud and characteristic.

Torches were waved on high, incense was burned before the bishops as they went to their several lodgings, and the whole city abandoned itself to songs of joy, amidst a general illumination.

Five days later the triumph was clouded by the arrival and fiery indignation of the Eastern bishops, whose feelings were thoroughly shared by Candidian, to whom John gave audience before he had wiped the dust of travel from his weary feet.

Candidian related the steps which he had taken to prevent the violent proceedings of the "Egyptian," as Cyril was styled. He had torn down the placard an-

ouncing the deposition of Nestorius, had pronounced it null and void in point of law, and had written in strong language to the emperor.

But all this was too little for John, who assembled instantly the bishops who adhered to his cause, and pronounced Cyril guilty of the Apollinarian heresy, sentencing him and Memnon of Ephesus to deposition, describing the African prelate as a monster born for the destruction of the Church.

His flock of Alexandria was inaccessible, but they determined instantly to bestow on that of Memnon at Ephesus the blessing of a faithful shepherd, and to consecrate a bishop in his stead. But Memnon was on the alert. The churches were all fortified against them, and a strong garrison posted in the cathedral.

Determined to succeed, they obtained troops from Candidian, and assaulted the sacred precincts; but the first assailants were routed and put to the sword, and finding the place impregnable, the besiegers abandoned their intention of bestowing on the unthankful multitude the blessing of a new bishop.

Not only was Ephesus defiled with sedition and clamour, strife and bloodshed, but the strife was extended to the court of Constantinople, where the battle between orthodoxy and heresy was to be fought out.

On the day after the deposition of Nestorius, Candidian followed up his protest against the validity of the proceedings by sending an "*ex parte*" statement, probably the work of Nestorius himself, to Theodosius. It is stated that when the "Egyptians" became impatient the question

had been referred to Candidian, whether they should wait for John of Antioch or proceed; that Candidian, in the emperor's name, bid them wait; that they had accepted his decision, but the "Egyptians"—whom they charged with using personal violence—had held their pretended council, and passed an illegal sentence of deposition. They begged the emperor to provide for their safety, and to give orders that a council should be held in the usual form.

The *council* also sent a synodal epistle to the emperor, simply stating that they had deposed Nestorius, and begging that the civil power might be put in action to enforce their sentence.

But the statements of Candidian and Nestorius had first reached the emperor, and had prepossessed Theodosius strongly against the council. He wrote hastily and angrily, declaring that the deposition, which had been decreed in cabal and passion, should be null and void, and that none of the bishops should leave Ephesus before the arrival of an imperial commissioner, as an associate to Candidian, when the disputed points should be examined by the *whole* council.

In reply to this missive, Cyril and the other leaders of the Catholic party wrote to justify themselves for acting before the arrival of John, and begged that five of their number might repair to court to give a true account of all that had happened. They asserted that they had the assent of the whole Catholic Church to their proceedings, and enclosed the acts of the council.

Meanwhile the schismatics had sent to the court a

statement of the (pretended) deposition of Cyril and Memnon, a deposition the more impudent as they were but thirty-four in number, and their adversaries more than two hundred. The sentence, again, was never published at Ephesus, and the council knew nothing of their proceedings.

They continued to forward their one-sided statements, and even had the audacity to pretend that they were only going to the church to pray, when the riot arose upon the occasion of their attempt to ordain a successor to Memnon.

Meanwhile the envoys from Rome, two bishops and a priest, made their appearance, having been detained a long time by contrary winds. A second session was immediately held, on the tenth of July, when a letter was read from Pope Cælestine, containing truly apostolical views of the episcopal office. He quotes the promises of Christ to His Apostles and their successors, and uses the significant words, "This office of teaching has descended *equally* upon all bishops; we are all engaged in it by hereditary right, all we who in the stead of the Apostles preach the word to all countries, according as it was said to them, 'Go ye and teach all nations.'"<sup>\*</sup>

The letter was received with acclamations, and the legates on the following day confirmed the deposition of Nestorius in the name of Rome and the West. Information of the fact was at once sent to the court at Constantinople, and petition preferred, that since the business upon which they had met together was thus happily concluded, they might be permitted to separate, for some

<sup>\*</sup> Fleury, b. xxv. c. 47.



were oppressed by poverty, others with illness, and many had even fallen victims to the climate.

Another letter to the clergy and laity of Constantinople acquainted them officially with the deposition of Nestorius, and exhorted them to pray for the appointment of a worthy successor.

They then cited John of Antioch to appear before them, to answer for his share in the audacious deposition of Cyril and Memnon; but he was surrounded by soldiers and others, who threatened the lives of the messengers. A second citation was nevertheless sent, with a like result; and then a third. But Nestorius and his party absolutely refused all communication, whereupon John of Antioch was himself excommunicated with his adherents.

At length the associate promised to Candidian arrived, Count John by name, with full powers from the emperor. He visited the bishops of each party separately, for their dissensions prevented any hope of seeing them altogether. Soldiers were even stationed between them to keep the peace between their respective followers, so sad was the discord.

At length a meeting was organized, at the expense of the absence of Cyril on the one hand, and Nestorius on the other, and the letter of Theodosius was read. It was most unsatisfactory to both parties, for it recognised and confirmed the depositions of *Nestorius*, *Memnon*, and *Cyril*, as if the three had been deposed by the whole council, and those bishops were immediately put under arrest.

This proceeding naturally caused great grief to the Catholics, who perceived that the emperor had been

grossly misinformed of the true state of the case. In fact the whole correspondence had been grievously tampered with, and their successive communications delayed.

They wrote again protesting against the great injustice to Cyril and Memnon (who bore their imprisonment most meekly), declaring in the most emphatic manner that they had deposed none, save the heretic Nestorius, and praying that their two companions might be at once restored to them. Not only did they write to the court, but to the Faithful in the city, especially to one Dalmatius, a well-known abbot revered for his sanctity. They added a postscript: "The hot and pestilential air kills us. Scarcely a day passes without a funeral, and our servants have all gone away sick to their homes; but *know* that we will perish here sooner than do aught save that our Lord hath ordained."

But these letters had small chance of reaching Constantinople. All the avenues of communication were guarded jealously by the partisans of Nestorius, who felt that if the emperor once came to know the whole truth their cause was ruined.

All their vigilance was, however, frustrated. A beggar concealed the letters in the hollow of his staff, and, begging his bread from door to door, passed the cordon of guards and spies, and delivered the precious missives safely into the hands of the Faithful of Constantinople.

The Catholics at once addressed Theodosius on behalf of their brethren in terms no less vigorous than respectful, but a more forcible appeal was at hand. Fired with zeal by the news from Ephesus, the clergy and the various

orders of monks sallied forth and aroused the populace. Dalmatius, who had not left his monastery for forty-eight years, imagined himself warned by a heavenly voice to place himself at their head. Filling the air with the thunder of chanted psalms, they approached the palace. Theodosius admitted a deputation to an immediate interview, and granted the boon they asked—permission for the representatives of the Catholic party to approach his person. The multitude returned, chanting the 150th Psalm, and in the church of S. Moschus, at the further extremity of the city, Dalmatius ascended the pulpit, read the letter from Ephesus, related the interview with the emperor, and the promise that the Catholic members of the council should be permitted to approach his person; upon which the multitude separated, filling the city with the cry, "Let Nestorius be anathema."

Theodosius now gave orders that eight deputies from each party should repair to Chalcedon, where during the first week of September he gave them audience.

As soon as the deputies had set out, he despatched orders to Nestorius to leave Ephesus, but to choose his place of retirement. He chose at once the monastery near Antioch, where he had received his education, and was furnished with the means of conveyance thither.

When the deputies reached Chalcedon, they were ordered to remain there, as the emperor feared their presence might endanger the peace of the city if they reached Constantinople. Thither he repaired to meet them, and gave them five distinct audiences. Theodoret of Cyrus was the leading spirit amongst the Nestorians; but his letters and

speeches evince confusion of thought rather than deliberate heresy.

The Catholic deputies refused to argue the doctrinal question before the emperor, but simply discussed its legal bearings. The Nestorians showed their unsoundness by their desire to appeal to Cæsar touching the things which were of God. This appeared to give them the advantage at first, and they confidently expected victory. Their friends came in great numbers from Constantinople, and they regaled them with long sermons, which, like modern Puritans, they appeared to prefer to the services of the Church.

But as the case became clearer to the mind of Theodosius, the hopes of the heretics declined, and the letters of Theodoret to his friends evince increasing dejection, especially after the news of the banishment of Nestorius to Antioch reached his partizans at Chalcedon.

After the fifth audience the decision was pronounced, the deposition of Nestorius was confirmed, and Cyril and Memnon were ordered to return to their sees. The council was ordered to dissolve, and the several bishops to return to their dioceses. At this blow the Nestorians lost all hope. They appealed piteously to Theodosius, telling him, with reproaches and entreaties, that "they were free from his blood;" but all was in vain.

The Catholic deputies proceeded to Constantinople, where, after some division of opinion, they appointed Maximian bishop of that city, and he was consecrated on October 25th, 431, four months after the deposition of Nestorius.

Meanwhile John and his companions proceeded homeward from Ephesus, with bitterness in their hearts, and determined on opposition to the last. At Ancyra they wrote to Maximian, saying that they neither recognized him, nor those who had ordained him, as bishops at all. At Tarsus they held another *council*, and solemnly deposed Cyril, and all the bishops also who had been at Constantinople to ordain Maximian, seven in number, including the Papal legate. Not yet satisfied, at Antioch they held yet another council, in which the Eastern bishops ratified the depositions already pronounced, writing also to the emperor, begging him to prohibit the circulation of the abhorred anathemas of Cyril.

To allay these animosities, Theodosius requested Cyril and John to meet at Nicomedia; but John refused to come excepting upon absolute compulsion. They held, however, another council at Antioch, in which they drew up six propositions, to which they required the assent of Cyril as a preliminary to any further communication.

Acacius of Berrhæa sent the propositions to Cyril, who had already made his triumphant entry into Alexandria, received as a conqueror returning from a mighty conflict. In reply, Cyril anathematized Apollinarius, and affirmed his steadfast belief that Jesus Christ was "perfect God and perfect Man, yet not two, but *one* Christ."

John of Antioch and Acacius were disposed to receive the statements of Cyril as sufficient; Theodoret of Cyrus regarded them as a virtual recantation of the twelve anathemas—an opinion simply grounded upon his own misconstruction of the latter; but Alexander of Hiera-

polis was so horrified at their leniency towards the "Egyptian" that he prayed the earth might open and swallow him up.

However, it was agreed that an emissary should be sent to Cyril with conditions of peace, and Paul, the aged Bishop of Emesa, undertook the office, bearing letters from John. As a necessary duty, Cyril required that Paul should acknowledge Maximian and anathematize the impieties of Nestorius, which he did, and was therefore permitted to attend the services of the Alexandrian Church. On Christmas Day, A.D. 432, he preached in the cathedral in the presence of Cyril, and set forth the Catholic doctrine in such plain and unequivocal language that he was twice interrupted by the acclamations of the people—"Welcome, O orthodox bishop, worthy of Cyril, gift of God." A second sermon on the octave of Christmas was equally well received.

Meanwhile tumults and misrepresentations at Constantinople had to be repressed before peace could really be made; and it is deeply to be regretted that bribery was the chief instrument by which this was effected, under the form of "eulogiæ," or presents, which were profusely showered from Alexandria upon those in office at court; so that Epiphanius, the archdeacon of that city, complained that the church was stripped, and that they owed the Count Ammonius fifteen hundred pounds' weight of gold.

Upon the return of Paul of Emesa to Antioch, bearing conciliatory messages from Alexandria, John of Antioch at last yielded, and consented to the deposition of Nestorius, formally anathematizing his doctrines. Theodoret

of Cyrus still held out, and denounced the weakness of John; but when, in the following year, it was intimated to him that he must choose between reconciliation and banishment, he consented to acknowledge the orthodoxy of Cyril and John, and this concession was accepted without his being required further to acknowledge the deposition of his friend Nestorius.

But even this concession could not satisfy Alexander of Hierapolis. He declared he would sooner suffer ten thousand deaths than be reconciled to the Egyptian, unless he would anathematize his own twelve articles. "Should all the men who have ever lived," he said, "rise from the dead, and call the abomination of Egypt '*pidy*,' I should yet prefer the knowledge God has given me." These words supply a sufficient key to his character.

Yet he was in other respects a most pious old man, and when he left his bishopric, in obedience to the edict, the whole city of Hierapolis was in strange commotion. The people wept aloud in the streets, saying they had lost their friend and pastor, who had instructed them from childhood. They praised his doctrine and the sanctity of his life. They uttered invectives against the emperor, and, indeed, some threatened suicide unless their bishop was restored. But neither Alexander nor the government would yield, and they lost their saint.

All this time Nestorius had remained in his monastery near Antioch. But after the last of his followers had either given way or been banished, the edicts of Theodosius were directed against the great heresiarch himself. It was enacted that his followers should be styled "Simonians,"

after Simon Magus, with what reason it is difficult now to perceive; that his books should be publicly burned, and his disciples prevented from meeting for public worship.

The following year, 436, he was banished to Petra, and all his property confiscated for the use of the Church of Constantinople. Afterwards he was removed to an oasis of the Libyan deserts, where no friendly sympathy could possibly cheer him; and here, while employed in writing a defence of his life and conduct, he was taken captive by a wandering tribe of savages, who released him near the frontiers of civilization. He reported himself at once to the authorities, but they chose to consider his compulsory return from banishment as a crime, and hurried him from one place of exile to another, allowing him no rest, until his health gave way, and the unhappy prelate breathed his last. It was currently reported that his fate resembled that of Herod, and that the rain would not fall upon his grave; but we can but ascribe the traditions to theological bitterness, unworthy of Christians. His crime had been an attempt to reduce the mystery of the Incarnation within the compass of human understanding, while he mercilessly persecuted all who differed from him; but his heresy was made the occasion of establishing the truth, and the decisions of the council of Ephesus have been accepted by the whole Catholic Church from that date until the present day.

But the doctrines of Nestorius, proscribed in the West, became triumphant in the East after a short lapse of time. The Christians beyond the limits of the empire, especially the Persians, took up the cause of Nestorius with enthu-



siasm, maintaining that he had been unjustly condemned, and that his adversaries denied the distinction between the Divine and Human natures in Christ. The famous school of Edessa, which had long flourished as the chief theological college of the East, received his doctrines, and instructed their youth in the Nestorian tenets, translating the works of Theodore of Mopsuestia and Nestorius into Persian and Arabic.

But the famous Barsamas of Nisibis, expelled from Edessa, laboured for half a century on behalf of the Nestorian cause, and ultimately persuaded the Persian monarch to limit toleration to the Nestorian Christians, and to banish all the Catholics. As the empire had taken the opposite course, the jealousy of the Persians caused them to embrace the cause of the schismatics with ardour. The city of Seleucia was made the principal seat of their "Catholicos," or patriarch, and it eventually became the Rome of the East, while the Christians of Asia, almost without exception, submitted to his authority.

A famous college was established at Nisibis, whence missionaries spread their tenets through Egypt, Syria, Arabia, Tartary, India, and China. Their doctrines, as finally settled by a succession of councils held at Seleucia, may be thus summed up:

- (1.) That in the Saviour of the world there were two Persons—the one Divine, the Eternal Word; the other Human, the Man Christ Jesus.
- (2.) That these two Persons had only one aspect.
- (3.) That the union formed at the moment when our Lord was conceived by the Holy Ghost was never to be

dissolved, but yet was only one of will and affection, not of unity of Person.

(4.) That Christ was, therefore, to be carefully distinguished from God, who dwelt in Him as in a temple, and that, therefore, Mary was to be called the *Christotokos*, not the *Theotokos*—the mother of Christ, not of God.

This communion, thus established, extended itself over the whole continent of Asia; it numbered its children by tens of millions, and possessed twenty-five provinces at the period of its greatest grandeur. It fell at length during the fearful storms of carnage and desolation which swept over Asia in the thirteenth century, and the darkness of paganism succeeded.

## CHAPTER XXII.

### FROM THE COUNCIL OF EPHESUS TO THE LATROCINIUM.

A.D. 430-449.

**D**URING the progress of the Nestorian controversy many important events occurred in various portions of the Church ; but we have thought it better to defer their narration to the present chapter, in order that the attention of the reader might not be distracted from the consecutive events of that most important controversy.

Foremost in interest to ourselves is, perhaps, the mission of S. Germanus, Bishop of Auxerre, and S. Lupus of Troyes, to Britain, where they were invited in order that they might dispel the grievous contagion of the Pelagian heresy, which, banished from the rest of Christendom, seemed to have found a last home in Britain, whence the founder, Pelagius, had emerged.

The chief teacher of these pernicious doctrines was one Agricola, the son of a Pelagian bishop ; and Bede relates that the faithful few, almost despairing of success, besought the aid of the two far-famed Gallic bishops.

They readily complied with the petition, and, putting to sea, sailed across the channel, notwithstanding (as Bede

tells us) the opposition of the demons, who raised storm and tempest against them. Having arrived, they performed many miracles, and filled the whole island with the fame of their eloquence and wisdom, so that the Faithful were confirmed, and the wandering recalled.

At length the Pelagians took courage to enter the lists, and challenged the Gallic missionaries to meet them in public disputation at the town of Verulam, famous for the shrine of the martyr, S. Alban.

The challenge was accepted, and the Pelagians came to the contest attended by a crowd of partizans gorgeously apparelled, and supported by the flattering sympathy of the weaker brethren.

An immense multitude assembled, and stood as spectators and judges between the disputants. On the *one* side, says Bede, was Divine Faith, on the *other* human presumption; on the *one* side Pelagius, on the *other* Christ.

Germanus and Lupus permitted their adversaries to speak first, and the Pelagians spoke for a long time with much empty eloquence.

Then the holy bishops replied with evangelical doctrine, supported by weighty proofs from Scripture. They supported their statements by quotations from the most eminent saints, whose written testimony they read to the multitude.

So marvellous was the effect of their discourse that the people greeted them with thundering acclamations, and were hardly restrained by the victors from laying violent hands on the heretics, who themselves confessed and abjured their errors.

The missionaries, thus victorious, repaired to the tomb of S. Alban, where they offered their thanks to God, who had caused the truth to become manifest. S. Germanus opened the tomb and deposited in it several relics which he had brought from Gaul, and taking from the tomb some dust, said to be crimson with the blood of the martyr, he left the shrine. He afterwards built a church at Auxerre to the memory of S. Alban, and deposited the precious "dust" therein.

Shortly after this conference the Saxons and Picts, with their united forces, made war upon the Britons, who felt themselves unequal to their adversaries, since the flower of their youth had been carried away from time to time, to shed their blood in the vain endeavour to stem the torrent of barbarian invasion on the Continent, leaving their own homes almost defenceless against the foe. In this distress they implored the prayers of Germanus and Lupus, who, hastening to their afflicted disciples, infused such courage that it might have been supposed they had brought military reinforcements. Lent was at hand, and was observed with the deepest signs of repentance and devotion. Many of the soldiers yet unbaptized received that sacrament from the Gallic bishops. The feast of Easter was celebrated in the army with great enthusiasm, and, relying upon the Divine assistance, the Britons ceased to fear the foe. Germanus himself volunteered to be their leader, and drew up his forces on the slopes of a valley surrounded by hills. A multitude of fierce enemies entered the defile, when Germanus instructed his troops to repeat his words, and, when the foe was safely within the toils,

shouted three times, with the surrounding priests, "Alleluia!" A universal shout of "Alleluia" followed, and the hills returning the echo, the enemy was struck with dread, and casting down their arms fled on all sides, while the Britons became inactive spectators of a bloodless victory. Having thus conquered the temporal as well as the spiritual foes of the Britons, Germanus and Lupus returned to Gaul amidst their fervent blessings.

But it was the last gleam of sunshine which fell upon the ancient British Church. Her people fell away again into various forms of heresy, and into grievous moral corruption, so grievous that not only, says Bede, were all the bonds of truth and justice broken, but men seemed unaware that such virtues had ever existed.

The tide of Saxon invasion increased with fearful violence; civilization vanished before the barbarism of our heathen forefathers; whole cities, with their inhabitants, were destroyed, every vestige of Roman luxury and art being trampled under foot by the stern and savage invaders. No mercy was shown to the priest at the altar or the family at the hearth, and the miserable fugitives were driven houseless into the forests, whence driven again by hunger they were sometimes forced to emerge, to become the sport or the slaves of the savage barbarians.

Many, however, found refuge in Cornwall or Wales, where they preserved some vestiges of the true Faith throughout the night of spiritual darkness which followed the Saxon conquest—a conquest which occupied successive generations.

But the light forsaking England shone upon Ireland. S. Patrick began his ministry in the year 432. He was born about the year 377, in the city of Alcuid, now called Dumbarton, in Scotland. At the age of sixteen he was taken by pirates and carried captive to Ireland, where he was sold to a pagan prince of Ulster, whose cowherd he became; and it was during his captivity in the midst of utter desolation that the love of God, he tells us, became as a burning fire within him, so that regardless of snow or rain, summer's scorching heat or winter's piercing cold, he continued in prayer on lone mountain top or desolate heath. After awhile, delivered from captivity, he repaired to Gaul, where he is said to have studied under S. Germanus, and to have received the monastic tonsure. Thence he repaired to Italy, and spent seven years in visiting monastery after monastery, learning something from each, to be turned to future account. There he was ordained priest, probably at Pisa, where he remained three years. And now his heart yearned to preach the good tidings of the gospel amongst those from whom he had suffered such grievous wrongs; and he returned to Ireland as a missionary in the true spirit of that Master who even from the cross prayed for His enemies.

At first he met with such little success that he returned discouraged to Gaul, and, after some years had elapsed, was sent by S. Germanus with letters of recommendation to Pope Cælestine, by whom he was ordained bishop, and sent to Ireland in the year 432.

And now it pleased God marvellously to bless his labours. Miracles are said to have accompanied his minis-

rations, city after city received the truth. He founded the metropolitan see of Armagh, which became a centre of spiritual life, and before his death, which occurred A.D. 460, at the age of eighty-three, he had the happiness of beholding Ireland a Christian nation.

The Church in the empire had long enjoyed rest from pagan intolerance; but we have again to relate a cruel persecution to which the Christians were subjected in Persia. The king, Isdegerdes, had been so favourably impressed by the preaching of an eminent missionary named Maruthas, that he had been almost on the point of embracing the Faith, when the imprudent zeal of a bishop named Abdas, who cast down a temple, sacred to the fire-god, destroyed the fair prospect. Isdegerdes required the restoration of the temple, but Abdas preferred the death of a martyr, and his execution was followed by a most cruel persecution which lasted thirty years. One of the most touching incidents connected with the persecution is the story of the deacon Benjamin, who was offered life upon the simple condition of abstaining from teaching and propagating the Faith. "How can I," he said, "to whom God has mercifully given light, withhold it from others?" and he was eventually put to most grievous torture. Remaining constant to the last, he was sentenced to the frightful death of being impaled.

Many fugitives crossed the frontier, and took refuge in the dominions of Theodosius. Isdegerdes demanded their extradition, but the Christian emperor indignantly refused to yield the confessors. War was accordingly declared.



The mountains of Armenia were filled with hostile armies, and God gave the victory to the protectors of His servants. Ten thousand of the "Immortals" were slain in the attack upon the Roman camp, and seven thousand captives must have perished of hunger, had they not been saved by the generous charity of Acacius, Bishop of Amida, who even sold the sacred vessels to procure food and to ransom the perishing Persians, whom he sent back to their king to tell him the true character of the Faith he persecuted. Isdegerdes was deeply moved, and invited Acacius to visit his court. A truce of one hundred years was ratified between the two governments, the persecution ceased, and an amicable partition of Armenia shed lustre upon the reign of Theodosius the younger.

On the very day the council of Ephesus was opened, June 22nd, A.D. 431, S. Paulinus of Nola was called to his rest. He had been forcibly ordained at Barcelona on Christmas Day, A.D. 394, after which he sold his whole estate, and, giving it to the poor, came into Italy and settled at Nola, where he spent a most holy life, retiring to a suburban residence near the church of S. Felix, for whom he had a special veneration. He was finally ordained Bishop of Nola, and held the see about twenty years. The gentleness of his character and the equity of his administration made him universally loved. His reputation as a poet and hymn-writer was also very high. In his seventy-eighth year he was seized with an attack of pleurisy, and two of his episcopal brethren came to visit him.

He desired them to celebrate the Holy Eucharist by

his bedside. When all was finished, he suddenly exclaimed, "Where are my brothers?" an exclamation he afterwards explained by stating that S. Martin and S. Januarius had seemed to be present with him during the administration, and had told him they would presently be with him again. At the hour of vespers, when the short office was usually said, at the lighting of the evening lamps, he stretched out his hands, and exclaimed, "I have prepared a lamp for Mine Anointed." (Ps. cxxxii. 17.) Then an interval of silence succeeded, until at the fourth hour of the night the hall was shaken as by an earthquake, and all present fell on their knees to pray. They looked up; he was gone, his face appearing white as snow. It was at the same hour that the populace of Antioch were filling the streets with their rejoicings over the condemnation of Nestorius.

During the eight years which followed the siege of Hippo, the African Church suffered a most cruel persecution from the hands of the Vandal, Genseric, the conqueror of Africa. This remorseless tyrant, after the unhappy invitation of Boniface had introduced his power into Africa, knew no rest until the whole province was in his hands. Yet his task was no easy one. He had succeeded to the throne during the minority of the sons of his elder brother, and the regent became the king. The unfortunate princes, his nephews, grown to man's estate, put forth their claims to power, but only to find an untimely grave; while their unhappy mother was thrown, by the tyrant's order, into the river Ampsaga. But the public discontent broke forth into dangerous conspiracies,

was cold and sarcastic, save when his anger was when it was very dangerous to oppose him. He the luxuries of other men, his chosen indulged the gratification of cruelty and revenge.

Advancing with slow yet certain steps, like inundation, province after province, city after city to his arms. The arts of war and peace were successively exerted. Treaties were made, kept when it was to his purpose, violated when their violation was profitable. The Roman power alone survived in that Carthage six centuries before had fallen beneath the might of republican Rome.

A contemporary writer, Salvian, tells us that the unhappy inhabitants were such as to merit vengeance. Plunged into every kind of vice, as if they had lost their senses. Everywhere we see drunkards, crowned and perfumed. Everywhere filled with snares against chastity, and dens of iniquity. Men were seen in the streets painted and ha-

heathen rites approached the Christian altar. But all the people had the most rooted aversion to the monks, howsoever holy and pure their lives might be; so that if one came from happier countries for some work of piety, the moment he appeared in public he was assailed with loud laughs, hissed at, and loaded with curses.

The buildings of the city were magnificent. A new port, the envy of other seaports, had been recently finished, and schools, colleges, and other public buildings rose on every side, while cool and shady groves were interspersed to shield the people from the African sun.

But the fall of their greatness was now at hand. A treacherous peace had relaxed their vigilance; and while they were simply intent upon the sports of the circus, Genseric drew near, and the city was surprised.

The unhappy inhabitants were treated with the usual cruelty, and reduced to utter destitution. The whole of their property was appropriated, and the attempt to secrete any portion of it punished with death and torture. But yet the conquerors were better men than the vanquished in many respects. Arians and heretics they indeed were, but they held the fashionable vices of Carthage in horror and contempt. The frivolity of the city was crushed beneath their iron hand.

Genseric partitioned the provinces of Africa amongst his followers, and, having no longer an enemy to dread, turned his attention to religion. He ordered the Arians to strip the bishops of all they had, and expel them from their sees, or, if they resisted, to make them slaves for life.

Quodvultdens, bishop of Carthage, and a great number of his clergy, being thus expelled, were stripped of everything they possessed, and put on board some rotten and crazy ships in order that they might perish at sea. By the mercy of God they were carried by wind and current to Naples, where, in common with tens of thousands of fugitives, they received a most brotherly welcome. The Catholics who remained were forbidden to exercise their worship, and were even compelled to bury their dead in solemn silence, without prayer or hymn.

The bishops of some of the desolated provinces waited upon Genseric as he walked near the sea, and begged that, although deprived of their churches and possessions, they might yet remain to minister in their poverty to their afflicted flocks.

But the tyrant was with difficulty restrained, by the entreaties of those around him, from throwing the trembling suppliants into the sea. They retired, struck with grief, and began to celebrate the Holy Mysteries, like their predecessors under Diocletian, in dens and caves of the earth.

Such was the downfall of the Catholic Church in Africa, a Church which had far exceeded Rome in eloquence and learning, although not in the self-devotion of her bishops. Men like Tertullian, Cyprian, and Augustine had made her famous throughout the world, and she had more than once testified her proud spirit of independence in opposition to the mighty prelates of Rome, as when Cyprian opposed Stephen, or, in later days, his successors opposed Zosimus, when he supported Pelagius.

But the days of her glory had passed away, and, although she emerged victorious over Arianism, after a fierce persecution, yet she never recovered her former supremacy, and eventually the flood of Mohammedan invasion overwhelmed the orthodox and unorthodox in one common destruction.

In January, A.D. 438, Proclus, the Patriarch of Constantinople, yielded to the pious solicitation of the clergy and laity of Constantinople, and obtained the imperial permission to translate the relics of S. Chrysostom from their resting-place at Comana to the city in which he had so nobly laboured for his Lord, whence his memory had never faded. Therefore, thirty-five years after his unjust deposition, the hallowed remains were brought to Constantinople and deposited in the Church of the Apostles, on the 27th of January. The emperor Theodosius advanced to meet them, and, falling prostrate before the coffin, implored, in the name of his guilty parents, Arcadius and Eudoxia, the forgiveness of the injured saint.

In the year 440, Sixtus of Rome died, and was succeeded by the great S. Leo, under whose pontificate Rome made very important advances towards that supremacy which she afterwards so fully attained. Had the African Church still flourished in its full vigour such a result might never have followed; but her removal left Rome without a rival in the West, and the patriarchates of the East were utterly weakened by their mutual dissensions.

But, apart from these considerations, we can but admire the providence of God in raising up a man of such mighty

intellect as Leo—so fervent in devotion, so brave and self-devoted—to snatch the sceptre as it fell from the nerveless grasp of the degenerate Cæsars, and fight the battle both of Church and state in this awful crisis, when civilization seemed utterly giving way before the barbarians.

Had not Christianity been of God it must of necessity have sunk with the fall of that vast social fabric under whose shadow it had arisen, and nothing save its organization as a vast spiritual kingdom, fitted to stand alone when the secular authority failed, could have saved it, humanly speaking.

It was in the year 440 that the election of S. Leo took place, while he was absent in Gaul, whither he had gone to reconcile two Roman generals, whose disunion was most dangerous to the sinking state.

A public deputation was sent to summon him to the Papal chair, and the Roman Church waited in unusual patience until his return. There was no opposition. The eyes of the whole population were turned upon Leo. He was the only man whom they could choose to fill so important a post, which, in the strange course of affairs, had become a far more important one than that of the successor of the Cæsars when the temporal power was about to forsake her seat upon the seven hills, like "the shadow that departeth," to be succeeded by a spiritual power, mighty for good, if, alas! sometimes mighty also for evil.

For the Huns, under their terrible leader, Attila, "the scourge of God," had appeared. The flood of barbarian immigration had carried them from the frontiers of China

to those of the empire, where they paused for a brief space, while they kept themselves in the practice of bloodshed at the expense of the tribes of Germany.

While on the one hand the Romans trembled, on the other hand the Persians shuddered at the name of this remorseless horde of barbarians, who threatened alike European and Asiatic civilization.

The limited knowledge which the inhabitants of the civilized regions possessed of the world beyond their own frontiers added to their bewilderment. The wilderness which the imagination of their ancestors had peopled with fabulous monsters, now yielded in verity monstrous men, short in stature, but of prodigious strength; of olive complexion and ugly in features, with deep-seated eyes, flat noses, and disproportionate forms. We can excuse the superstition which assigned their origin to the union of evil spirits with hags of the wilderness.

Their religion was of the worst type of Paganism, and its chief solemnity the offering of human sacrifices to some sanguinary deity. Cutting off the shoulder and arm of the victim, and tossing it into the air, they foretold future events from the manner in which the mangled mass reached the ground.

At the accession of Leo, the empire of the Huns extended from the Baltic Sea on the north to the Danube on the south, and from the Volga on the east to the Rhine on the west, while the very name of Attila caused the degenerate citizens of Rome to speak with bated breath of him who could bring into the field an army of seven hundred thousand barbarians.



Yet they strove to drown their apprehensions by unlimited devotion to the sports of the circus.

"One might think," writes Salvian, "that the whole Roman people had gorged itself with sardonic herbs. The ghastliness of death is on it, and it laughs; but in all the world our mirth is but the forerunner of our weeping."

At length the crisis came. In the year 441, the barbarian host crossed the Danube, the fortresses which defended the Illyrian frontier were swept away like straw before the wind, the whole breadth of the peninsula, from the Euxine to the Adriatic, was at once desolated by the myriads of human locusts who followed "the scourge of God."

Unlike his warlike ancestors, Theodosius did not take the field in person, but he recalled the troops who were aiding the Africans against the Vandals, and the garrisons from the Persian frontier.

A large army assembled in the Roman name, but the Roman spirit was no more. In three successive engagements the forces of the empire were miserably overthrown. The whole East fell into the power of the ferocious Huns. Seventy cities were literally erased from the map, and the walls of Constantinople alone shielded Theodosius and his court.

Thus humbled and reduced to despair, the emperor sought for peace, or rather mercy, and obtained it, but only upon conditions which made him the tributary of Attila, and compelled him to deliver every deserter from the camp of the Huns, who had found refuge within the walls of the city, to a cruel death at the hands of the remorseless conquerors.

The only retaliation the Romans dared to make was an unworthy attempt to assassinate the fierce tyrant, whom they regarded as the incarnation of diabolic power; but this too failed, and Attila contemptuously allowed them to atone for the attempt by an addition to the tribute. Such was the political state of affairs in the period immediately succeeding the "Third General Council."

In the year 444, the great S. Cyril died at Alexandria, on the ninth of June, having governed the Church there for thirty-two years, during which he had been as truly the champion of the verity of our Lord's Incarnation as his great predecessor, S. Athanasius, had been of His Divinity. He was unequal in wisdom and in moderation to his sainted predecessor, yet every believer in the *one* Person and *two* Natures of our Blessed Lord owes S. Cyril a debt of gratitude. His fiery and impulsive nature often led him to sacrifice the means to the end; but who can doubt that his heart was right with God, and that if he sometimes erred, it was never with an unworthy motive, never for the sake of self, only for that cause which he honestly believed—the cause of God and of revealed truth.

He was succeeded by Dioscorus, a man who, previous to his elevation, bore a high character, but, as we shall shortly perceive, was utterly unworthy to sit in the seat of S. Cyril.

He began his episcopate by confiscating the property of the relations of his predecessor, under the false pretence that it was "church property," and in every way showed the greatest jealousy of the reputation of S. Cyril, and the

most deadly enmity to those whom that saint had loved and trusted. He did not even hesitate to attempt the assassination of the more prominent objects of his hatred, fearing, perhaps, that by their means his own misappropriation of church property and scandalous inconsistency might be published to the world. .

But events were ripening fast which have bestowed upon him an unenviable prominence in the pages of the ecclesiastical historian.

When Dalmatius issued from his convent to intercede with Theodosius on behalf of the orthodox members of the "Third General Council," then confined at Ephesus, he was accompanied by one *Eutyches*, the abbot of a neighbouring monastery, revered, like himself, for sanctity and love of retirement—a love so real that he had not passed the threshold of his monastery for fifty years, when the peril of the Faith called him forth.

But the reaction from Nestorianism drove him and many others into an opposite error, and led eventually to the formal denial of the perfect Humanity of our Lord; so that Eutyches and his partisans asserted that "confusion of substance" deprecated in the Athanasian Creed, and spoke of the Sacred Humanity as absorbed in the Divinity as a drop of honey might be in the ocean.

Flavian was now Bishop of Constantinople, having succeeded Proclus in the year 447.

He was holding a local synod of his clergy, when Eusebius of Dorylæum, who had been the first accuser of Nestorius, now accused Eutyches of the opposite heresy.

Flavian, startled by so serious an accusation against a

man of such reputed sanctity, earnestly enquired, "Could not Eusebius visit him as a friend, and endeavour, by kind and gentle persuasion, to lead him back into the way of truth?" but Eusebius replied, that he had endeavoured to do so many times, and "could not go and hear him blaspheme again."

It was then thought necessary to summon Eutyches before the council; but he replied that he was under a vow never to cross the threshold of his monastery; to which they rejoined, "He had already done so to accuse Nestorius, and might surely do so again to vindicate his own reputation."

At length he came, an old man seventy years of age, whose retinue of civil officers, soldiers, monks, and clergy attested both his great popularity, and the sensation excited by the charge against one so venerated.

There was no wish or intention to deal hardly with him. He was only pressed to give distinct answers to two or three questions upon fundamental doctrines; but he evaded some, and refused to own in answer to others, when closely pressed, that our Lord possessed two Natures after the Incarnation, or was consubstantial with us after the flesh. At length the council, with manifest reluctance, performed their stern duty, and both deposed and excommunicated him. In spite of this decision, his monks remained faithful to their spiritual superior, and it became the painful duty of Flavian to lay them under an interdict, forbidding the celebration of the Eucharist, and placing the whole body under censure.

Such was at this period the jealousy between the great

sees of Constantinople and Alexandria, that malcontents at the one naturally sought support from the other, and the misfortunes of Eutyches and his monks were speedily reported to Dioscorus, the Patriarch of Alexandria.

He took up the cause at once with the greatest warmth, as if he were a second Cyril dealing with a second Nestorius, and, in conjunction with the enunch Chrysaphius, who was the personal enemy of Flavian, succeeded in persuading Theodosius to summon a "general council," to meet again at Ephesus on the first of August, A.D. 449.

The council met at the same church in which the third general council had been held eighteen years before. About a hundred and thirty bishops were present. Dioscorus, like his predecessor Cyril, presided. Julius, the legate of S. Leo, took the second place; Juvenal of Jerusalem, the third; Domnus of Antioch, the fourth; and Flavian, contrary to precedent, was only allowed the fifth seat.

Leo, following the example of his predecessors, had refused to come in person, but, as we have seen, was represented by Julius and two other legates, Renatus, and Hilarus a deacon. Renatus had died on the road, and Hilarus was allowed the sixth place in the assembly.

At the commencement of the proceedings, Hilarus excused the absence of Leo, stating that he could not leave his flock, who were in great excitement and terror on account of the Huns, and proceeded to deliver a summary of the doctrine of the Church upon the subject in dispute, drawn up by the Roman pontiff, and known to posterity as the "Tome of S. Leo." This document became of great importance in the ensuing controversy, the

*unity* of Person, yet *distinction* of Natures, being set forth with such clearness, that in after ages it seemed necessary to account for its production by a miracle, and it was fabled that it had been corrected by S. Peter himself, upon whose altar it had been formally placed.

But Dioscorus contrived to prevent it from being read, and bade Eutyches make his defence. It was a strange defence. He repeated the Nicene Creed, anathematized all heresies, and called upon the council to avenge him of his adversaries.

Flavian requested that the accuser, Eusebius, might next be heard; but the imperial commissioner, Elpidius, replied that they were assembled to give sentence upon the judgment, not to allow the accuser a second opportunity of pleading his cause; as if the sentence could be judged when the defendant, but not the accuser, had been heard.

Again evading an attempt of Hilarus to read the "Tome of S. Leo," Dioscorus bade them read the Acts of the Synod held by Flavian at Constantinople. When the reader had reached that portion of the "Acts" which recorded the demand of Eusebius that Eutyches should own two Natures in Christ, Barsumas, a Syrian abbot, whom the emperor had deputed to represent the monastic element in the quarrel, raised the cry, "As he divides, so let him be divided. If he says two Natures, cut him in two;" and an indescribable scene ensued. Some shouted, "Burn him!" some echoed the words of Barsumas, and the scene rather resembled the wild proceedings of a revolutionary mob than those of a church council. "Will

you endure," exclaimed Dioscorus, "to hear of two Natures after the Incarnation?" "Anathema!" "Anathema!" responded his adherents. "Let those who cannot shout raise their hands. I want both voices and hands," he exclaimed, and the result of his demand convinced him that he had an overpowering majority, and might safely put the question, "*Is Eutyches orthodox?*"

Juvenal of Jerusalem, stifling, like the rest, his convictions, voted in the affirmative, and prelate after prelate followed the example thus set them. The deposition of Eutyches was annulled, and he was pronounced orthodox and blameless.

Then came the second question, the one nearest to the heart of Dioscorus—"Should Flavian and Eusebius suffer the doom pronounced by them on Eutyches?"

The monks of Eutyches presented a petition, setting forth their sufferings under the sentence now proved to have been unjust, as they urged.

They had renounced all worldly dignities to serve God as monks, and they had been laid under an interdict. Their altar, erected by Flavian himself six months before this proceeding, had remained without the Sacrifice, and some of the brethren had even died under this sentence. They add, "The feast of our Lord's Nativity saw us in tears; the day of Epiphany, the day of the Passion, the holy night, and the day of the Resurrection found us still in the same misery, and cut off from the Holy Mysteries."

They, therefore, demanded the punishment of Flavian, and they appealed to one who was only too anxious to grant their request. The traditional jealousy between the

two great sees, Alexandria and Constantinople, now reached its height; it had animated Theophilus against S. Chrysostom, S. Cyril against Nestorius; and now Dioscorus eclipsed all his predecessors by the eagerness with which, as president of the council, he proclaimed, with the most flagrant injustice, that Flavian and Eusebius had fallen under the anathema of that decree of Ephesus which forbade any tampering with the Faith of Nicæa, and pronounced the deposition of them both.

But although the bishops, in their fear of this arrogant patriarch, had acquitted a guilty man, they hesitated to condemn an innocent one. Flavian disclaimed the authority of his unprincipled opponent; while the Bishop of Iconium clasped the knees of Dioscorus, and entreated him not to proceed; but, rising to his full height, Dioscorus cried out, "Take notice, he who will not sign this deposition shall have to deal with me; although you should cut my tongue out, duty compels me to pronounce this deposition. Would you make a sedition? *Where are the counts?*"

At these latter words, as at a preconcerted signal, which doubtless it was, in rushed the military armed with swords and clubs and carrying chains and fetters, which it is evident must have been in readiness for the occasion.

They were followed by a yet more formidable mob of Egyptian monks and parabolani, wild as savages, and in their lawless fanaticism ready for any deed of violence, so utterly had they lost sight of the first principles of Christianity.

The bishops, who had dared to side with Flavian ever so slightly, were struck with clubs and loaded with fetters,



amidst a storm of oaths and curses, but the full violence of the storm fell upon that unhappy prelate himself. He was knocked down, and as he lay on the floor of the church (for be it remembered all this took place in the church of the "Theotokos") some kicked him, others trampled upon him, whilst the abbot Barsumas, standing over the prostrate bishop, cried aloud, "Stab him, stab him!"

The other bishops, alas! lacked that spirit which once animated the martyrs. They weakly yielded to their oppressors, overcome by pain and fear; they obeyed the tyrant of Alexandria, and one after the other signed with trembling hands the deposition of the unhappy Flavian. All, save a few, who resisted a few hours longer, but locked up in the chapter-house, yielded before the set of sun.

Only *one*, so far as we know, was "amongst the faithless faithful found"—the noble Roman deacon Hilarus. But they sought to take his life; and effecting his escape with great difficulty, he hid in obscure lodgings, and, travelling by bye-paths, succeeded in escaping his pursuers, who scoured the country in search of him. It was a long time before he reached home, after great privations, borne with heroic endurance, and detailed the proceedings to the astonished and indignant Leo. It was *no* council; it was a "*Latrocinium*"—a den of robbers—cried the Pope; and posterity has recognized the justice of the appellation.

One thing neither Leo nor Hilarus knew at the moment—the unhappy Flavian was no more. He died of the brutal injuries he had received, at an obscure village in Lydia, to which they had banished him only three days after the scene we have faintly endeavoured to describe.

Neither did the bishops, who had so weakly yielded, wholly escape; many of them, including Domnus of Antioch, were deposed on the charge of having treated the memory of Cyril with irreverence—a strange charge for Dioscorus to bring forward.

There was great joy amongst the Eutychians, and the Alexandrian prelate, whose immoralities were notorious, was exalted as a man of God, a defender of His people; but their day of power was short.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

### THE EUTYCHIAN CONTROVERSY AND THE COUNCIL OF CHALCEDON.

A.D. 451.

**E**DICTS, issued in the name of Theodosius the younger and Valentinian III., confirmed the decrees of the Latrocinium, and placed the deposed bishops and their followers under the ban of the civil power, commanding that no one should succour or assist them, and that their writings should be burned.

In spite of these edicts, S. Leo showed an unwavering opposition to the proceedings of the Eutychians. Hilarus arrived at Rome in September, after escaping many perils, and in October a synod was held at Rome, which pronounced the proceedings at Ephesus null and void.

Several letters were drawn up in the name of S. Leo and the synod; the first to the emperor Theodosius, which complained of the violent and tyrannical measures adopted by Dioscorus, and of the irregularity of the whole proceedings, and besought him, in conjunction with Valentinian, to order a general council to be held in Italy, which should decide the question.

Another letter to Pulcheria complains that the "Tome of S. Leo" was not allowed to be read. A third, to the

clergy and laity of Constantinople, beseeches them to continue steadfast in faith, and not to recognize another bishop while Flavian yet lived; for the news of his death had not yet reached the Western Church. Indeed, a special letter of consolation was addressed to him personally by S. Leo.

Theodoret of Cyrus, who had also been deposed by Dioscorus, in the name of the council, wrote a long letter to Leo, in which he earnestly protested against so unjust a sentence pronounced against him in his absence, after an episcopate of twenty-six years, during which he asserted that none of his clergy had ever appealed to a civil court, and heresy had been so completely extirpated that not a heretic remained unconverted within the eight hundred parishes of his vast diocese.

On the approach of the feast of S. Peter, A.D. 450, the emperor Valentinian III., attended by his mother, Placidia, and the empress Eudoxia, came from Ravenna to keep the festival in Rome. On the day of the festival, Leo and his suffragans, who had assembled at Rome for this solemnity, addressed themselves solemnly from the altar to the imperial party, imploring them earnestly not to look on unmoved while the Faith was in such danger.

Valentinian was greatly moved by this appeal, and wrote at once to Theodosius upon the subject, while Placidia also wrote with similar intent to Pulcheria. But Theodosius had taken his course. He honestly believed that the proceedings of the council had been perfectly regular, being deceived by the Eutychians, and replied that Flavian and his adherents deserved their fate, that the results of the

council had been excellent, and that the whole East was now united in the profession of the Catholic Faith.

But the obstacle was suddenly removed. On the 29th of July, in the same year, Theodosius died, in the fiftieth year of his age, and the forty-second of a reign, during which he had ever been actuated by the spirit of Christianity, although he had lacked the wisdom and energy so needed at such a period.

His sister, Pulcheria, succeeded; but to avoid the appearance of novelty, which would attach itself to the sole rule of an empress, she married one Marcian, a general of great reputation, and, like herself, a zealous Catholic.

The eunuch Chrysaphius, who had poisoned the late emperor's mind against Flavian, and had been the ally of Dioscorus, was deposed from his office, and banished to a distant island, where he was afterwards put to death—a punishment due to his many crimes.

The legates of Pope Leo now arriving met with a most favourable reception. Anatolius, the successor of Flavian, although appointed through the influence of Dioscorus, warmly espoused the true Faith, and caused a synod to be held at once at Constantinople, wherein both Nestorius and Eutyches were anathematized, and Anatolius signed the Tome of S. Leo.

Under the united influence of Leo and Anatolius, Marcian and Pulcheria summoned a general council to undo the mischief of the Latrocinium. Leo particularly wished that it should be held in Italy, but Marcian earnestly desired that it should take place in his dominions, and it was summoned to meet at Nicæa on the first of September, A.D. 451.

Meanwhile the body of Flavian was brought, by the emperor's orders, to Constantinople, and interred, with great solemnity and honour, in the church of the Apostles amongst his predecessors.

The bishops had already assembled at Nicæa, when letters came from Marcian requesting them to hold the council at Chalcedon; since affairs of state, of urgent importance, would not suffer him to leave for Nicæa, and the legates of S. Leo desired his presence to restrain the probable violence of the Eutychians.

The bishops having arrived from Nicæa, and the representatives of the imperial court from Constantinople, the Fourth General Council assembled at Chalcedon in the Church of S. Euphemia the martyr, situated outside the city, on the sea coast. The situation was strikingly beautiful; behind, rose mountains clothed with wood, and before them, across the narrow Bosphorus, lay the magnificent city of Constantinople, forming a glorious spectacle from the elevation on which the church was built.

The entrance to the church was through a large open court or peristylum, surrounded by a colonnade supported by pillars. Beyond the Basilica, rose a lofty dome supported by columns, around which were galleries for the people who attended to pray. Underneath the dome was the tomb of the saint, a silver shrine, near which hung a large painting of her martyrdom, and it was commonly believed that miracles were wrought there.

Here, on the eighth of October, A.D. 451, assembled the largest of the General Councils of the Church, the whole number of bishops present, or represented, amounting to

*six hundred and thirty.* The secular power was represented by nineteen of the chief officers of the empire.

Before the altar screen sat the imperial representatives, on their left the legate of Leo; and, in order, Anatolius of Constantinople, Maximus of Antioch, and the other Eastern bishops; on their right, Dioscorus of Alexandria, Juvenal of Jerusalem, and the other bishops of Egypt and Palestine. The Gospel was placed in the centre.

At the commencement of the proceedings, the legates arose and protested against the presence of Dioscorus amongst the judges, and after some discussion, he was bidden by the magistrates to leave his place, and take a seat in the midst of the assembly, as one under accusation.

Eusebius, the accuser of Nestorius and Eutyches, now advanced, and conjured the council to allow his petition to be read. He stated that he had been wrongfully deposed by Dioscorus, and that Flavian had been murdered, while the Catholic Faith had been depraved. His request was granted, and he too sat in the midst.

Then the Acts of the Latrocinium were read, not without some opposition on the part of Dioscorus, after which Theodoret of Cyrus was ordered to take his place in the assembly.

A fearful uproar ensued. The moment Theodoret appeared, the bishops of Egypt and Palestine exclaimed, "Away with the Jew! Away with the blasphemer, the Nestorian!" while in retaliation the orthodox cried out, "Nay; rather turn out Dioscorus, with his train of Manichæans and murderers! Drive out the murderer, Dioscorus!"

Theodoret, however, took his seat in the midst, as a plaintiff rather than a judge, and the proceedings were continued.

Dioscorus now declared that he alone was not responsible for the doings at the Latrocinium, that the whole council approved it by word and by writing, and Theodosius confirmed it; to which the Easterns replied, "Nobody consented to it. We were forced by blows to sign a *blank* paper while soldiers stood over us with clubs and swords. The soldiers deposed Flavian!"

The Bishop of Ephesus further testified that three hundred monks tried to kill him because he had given hospitality to Eusebius, and that he was not allowed to stir from the church until he had subscribed the condemnation of Flavian.

When the reader of the Acts of the Latrocinium came to the mention of the Tome of S. Leo, the Archdeacon *Ætius* cried out, "Dioscorus swore seven times before us all that it should be read, but it was not; therefore he is perjured." Others took up the same cry, and Dioscorus strove to evade the question in vain.

It was also proved that he had prevented any other notaries than his own from taking notes, and that his notaries had taken the writing materials from others with such violence as to break their fingers.

Still, Dioscorus made a desperate fight. He reviled those who had weakly yielded to him, as cowards, who lacked the spirit of martyrs. He insisted that in condemning him they condemned Cyril, and also Gregory and Athanasius. "I am ejected with the fathers," he



said. The truth was, that he quoted their writings apart from the context, and thus affixed a different sense to them.

The injustice of the condemnation of **Flavian** was now completely proved, and the iniquitous proceedings of **Dioscorus** were so evident, that **Juvenal** of Jerusalem and the other bishops of Palestine, followed by numerous others, including some of his own suffragans, formally ranged themselves on the opposite side of the council, and the tyrannical patriarch was left with only thirteen bishops to support him.

The constant reference to the **Latrocinium** by the bishops made it evident how deeply the iron had entered into their souls on that occasion. Not one bitter speech or deed of violence was suppressed.

Sometimes **Dioscorus** vainly denied the facts; sometimes he taunted his opponents with their cowardice, since they had not dared to suffer for what they now affirmed to have been their belief.

Thus the exciting contest was prolonged until darkness prevailed, and the session proceeded for a time by the light of tapers.

At length the imperial commissioners pronounced it evident that **Flavian** and **Eusebius** had been unjustly deposed, and gave it as their opinion that the leaders in the late council should share the fate they had so unjustly inflicted. One day, they said, had sufficed to clear the memory of the sufferers, and to fix the guilt on their accusers; the question of faith might be referred to the second session. **Dioscorus** was placed under arrest, from

a not unnatural apprehension that he might leave the city and take refuge amongst his followers at Alexandria, where the hand of justice could scarcely have reached him.

At the second session, a Greek translation of the Tome of S. Leo was read, at the close of which the assembled bishops cried out, "This is the faith of the fathers; this is the faith of the apostles; we all thus believe; anathema to him who believes otherwise! Thus Cyril taught; the teaching of Cyril and Leo is one. Peter hath spoken by Leo; why was not this read at Ephesus?" But as some of the bishops wished for some time fully to read and inwardly digest the Tome, the question of its acceptance as the Faith of the council was deferred for five days.

On the 13th of October the third session was held; the magistrates were absent, and the trial of Dioscorus was conducted in due canonical form.

Twice he was summoned to appear before the council, but in vain. First he said his guards would not permit him, and when this objection was removed, demanded that the magistrates should again be present, which was not conceded.

In the meantime, certain clergy and laity from Alexandria presented petitions against Dioscorus, and begged that their accusations might be heard. The council ordered them to be admitted, and the deacon Theodorus first made his accusation, charging Dioscorus with heresy, tyranny, and immorality. "He is a heretic, an Origenist, and blasphemes the Holy Trinity. He has committed murders, cut down trees, burned and pulled down houses; he has

ever led an infamous life, as I am prepared to prove. Lastly, when at Nicæa, in company with ten bishops from Egypt, whom he forced to sign their names by compulsion, he presumed to excommunicate the Holy See of Rome."

Ischyriion, another Alexandrian deacon, stated that the emperors were accustomed to send corn to the churches in Libya, both to provide for the "Bloodless Sacrifice" and to comfort the poor and needy; but Dioscorus appropriated the corn, and sold it at a high price, so that the Sacrifice could not be offered, and the poor and needy were deprived of their comforts. A lady named Peristeria had left large sums for charitable purposes; Dioscorus gave it to the dancing women connected with the theatre. His incontinence was so notorious that he had been openly denounced by the people of Alexandria. Ischyriion, in common with all the friends of Cyril, had suffered grievously. But indeed the intense malice of Dioscorus towards the friends of his sainted predecessor was fully proved by the nephews of S. Cyril, who had been deprived, in company with their whole kindred, of all they possessed; so that they had been driven to take refuge at Constantinople, where, at the request of Dioscorus, Chrysaphius took in hand the office of persecutor. He had even in his spite prohibited them from attending the public baths, or from buying bread. But a layman, Sophionius, had even a more scandalous tale of oppression to relate, and brought charges of robbery, adultery, and treason, at which the council might well stand aghast.

They cited Dioscorus to appear the third time, and cited

him in vain. Therefore he was condemned in his absence (1) for his misdemeanours; (2) for receiving Eutyches to communion; (3) for his conduct at Ephesus; (4) for his pretended excommunication of Leo; (5) for refusing to obey the citations of the council. Wherefore, in the name of the Roman bishop, of S. Peter, and of the council, they sentenced him to be deprived of the episcopal degree and every ministerial office.

The emperor ratified the sentence, and banished the guilty patriarch to Gangra, in Paphlagonia, where, three years later, he died.

At the fourth session, on the 17th of October, the council adopted the Tome of S. Leo as the expression of their faith in the Incarnation. The Egyptian bishops, thirteen in number, piteously entreated, and hardly obtained, permission to withhold their signatures till a new patriarch was appointed in the place of Dioscorus, alleging that otherwise they should be murdered upon their return to Egypt. "For God's sake," they cried, "consider our grey hairs, and spare ten men whose lives are in your hands." Their abject entreaties prevailed, and at the intercession of the magistrates, they were allowed to tarry at Constantinople till a successor was appointed to Dioscorus. Their apprehensions were not without foundation; for when a successor was at length appointed, most fearful conflicts took place between the troops and the populace; so that when the soldiers, being defeated, took refuge in an old temple of Serapis, the multitude set it on fire, and they were burned alive. Proterius, who succeeded, had ever to be attended by a guard of soldiers, so jealous were the

people of any foreign interference with their ecclesiastical independence and dignity.

Barsumas, with eighteen of his followers, begged permission to retain their posts, but were simply allowed a month to recant. They refused to do so, and went into exile. Barsumas was received by the council with the cry, "To the amphitheatre with the murderer." It was scarcely unjust.

At the fifth session, the decree of the council concerning the doctrine in dispute was finally formulated. Confirming the Nicene Creed, it asserted the necessity of guarding against errors not contemplated at Nicæa.

It adopted the Tome of S. Leo as a sufficient bulwark against the opposite errors of Nestorius and Eutyches. It affirmed that Christ is consubstantial with the Father as touching His Godhead, with us as touching His Manhood, and that He is "one and the same Christ, Son, Lord; the Only Begotten in two Natures; without confusion, change, division, or separation; the difference of the Natures being in no wise taken away by reason of their union, but, on the contrary, the properties of each Nature being preserved, and meeting in one Person and Hypostasis; so that, not being divided or separated in two Persons, He, one and the same, is the only begotten Son, Christ our Lord."

Thus having defined the Faith, the council enjoined the penalties of excommunication and deposition to those who should hereafter think or teach otherwise.

The most important work of the council was now accomplished, but there were many other matters connected with the well-being of the Church which were settled in repeated sessions of the assembly.

At the sixth session the Emperor Marcian appeared in person, and was received with enthusiasm. He declared that his only purpose in attending the council was to establish the Faith, not to display his power. The emperor and Pulcheria were hailed as a new "Constantine and Helena," amidst anathemas against Nestorius, Eutyches, and Dioscorus; and the decrees of the council were solemnly ratified. Another article proposed by the emperor deserves notice. Expressing approbation of the monastic life, it prohibits the monks from acting disorderly, or mixing themselves up with ecclesiastical or secular affairs, save in cases of necessity. The council signified their assent by acclamations, doubtless remembering Barsumas, and his violence.

The seventh synod was occupied in settling matters concerning jurisdiction.

In the eighth, Theodoret of Cyrus anathematized Nestorius, and was by unanimous consent restored to his see as an orthodox bishop. He had never consented to this anathema before, and his doing so now must be construed as an acknowledgment that he had previously erred, noble and praiseworthy as was the general course of his ministry.

The remaining sessions of the council were eight in number. At the fifteenth session the famous twenty-eighth Canon of Chalcedon was passed, which assigned to Constantinople the second rank in ecclesiastical dignity, upon the especial ground that it was a new Rome.

The civil greatness of Rome was thus recognized as the source of her ecclesiastical supremacy—a view of the

case which Leo absolutely refused to admit, referring the prerogatives of his see to the authority derived from S. Peter, the prince of the Apostles, whose primacy had, as he maintained, descended upon his successors. He objected again, but vainly, to the degradation of Alexandria and Antioch to the third and fourth rank, insisting that mere temporal greatness could not confer a priority upon Constantinople over the sees founded by the Apostles. The canon was, however, enforced by the Eastern court in spite of his protestations.

Juvenal of Jerusalem was awarded the dignity of patriarch, with authority over Palestine, which had formerly been dependent upon Antioch, the importance of the holy city having greatly risen owing to the growing practice of pilgrimage, which drew visitors from every country to which the gospel had penetrated.

The sixteenth session closed the council, and finally, after an address of fervent thanksgiving to the emperor and empress, and to Leo, the worthy successor of Peter, the bishops separated on the first of November, A.D. 451.

The decrees of Chalcedon were received by the whole Catholic Church, and it has ever been accounted the Fourth Ecumenical Council. Eutyches was deposed and banished by the civil power, as Dioscorus had already been, and their names disappear from the history of the Church.

The year 451 is a remarkable epoch in the history of the human race; not only for the great council which stereotyped the doctrine of the Incarnation, and formed

a bulwark against future heresy, but because about the same time the conquering legions of the Huns met with a permanent check, and Europe was saved from Asiatic barbarism. It is impossible to overestimate the importance of the crisis. The question was to be decided, whether Germans and Goths should frame the modern kingdoms of civilized Europe from the dismembered fragments of the older civilization, or whether the whole of Europe, as of Asia, should pass under the sway of barbarians as ruthless as Genghis Khan or Tamerlane.

So terrible was their progress, that Christians as well as Pagans looked upon their leader Attila as the impersonification of the avenging wrath of God. He claimed to be the descendant of Nimrod, and the man-child mentioned in the Apocalypse as one destined to rule the nations with a rod of iron.

Twelve centuries had now passed since the foundation of Rome by Romulus, and the common belief that they were to be the limit of the duration of the empire (derived from the vultures of Romulus), held possession of every breast, as it had when centuries of the period had yet to run their course. Now the fulfilment of the prophecy seemed at hand, and Attila its instrument.

In the preceding year, he had set his forces in motion for the conquest of the Western provinces of the empire, even to the Atlantic, intending to crush the Goths unless they would join his standard, and then to descend with irresistible force, like an avalanche, from the Alps on the plains of Italy, to trample under foot all that yet lingered of Roman power.



Early in A.D. 451, he crossed the Rhine near its confluence with the Neckar with an army of five hundred thousand men. He reached Metz on Easter Eve, set the city on fire, butchered the whole population, and massacred the priests at the foot of the altars. Nothing escaped the flames save the oratory of S. Stephen. In rapid succession Rheims, Cambray, Besançon, Langres, and Auxerre shared the same fate. At Paris, the alarm was so great that the inhabitants thought of evacuating the city; but S. Genevieve exhorted them to put their trust in God, and give themselves to His protection, assuring them He would hear their prayers. The Huns, in fact, did not come near Paris, but directed their course to Orleans, the heroic defence of which city, perhaps, saved the civilized world.

The city had fortunately been strengthened by recent fortifications, and the assaults of the Huns were vigorously repelled by the faithful valour of its soldiers and citizens. The pastoral diligence of Anianus, a bishop of primitive sanctity and consummate prudence, exhausted every source of spiritual comfort to support their courage until the arrival of succour. After an obstinate siege the walls were shaken by the battering rams. The Huns had already occupied the suburbs, and all the people who could not bear arms lay prostrate in prayer. Anianus despatched a trusty messenger to the ramparts to look for the expected succour. Twice he returned without any intelligence of approaching aid; but the third time he mentioned a small cloud which he had dimly discerned on the verge of the horizon. "It is the aid of God," exclaimed the bishop in a tone of pious confidence, and the whole multitude took

ie cry. The remote object grew larger each moment. as a cloud indeed, but of dust, and betokened the march of an army, and when a favourable wind blew the dust, the Roman squadrons under Ætius, and Gothic followers of Theodoric, king of the Visigoths, discovered in deep array, pressing forward to the of Orleans.

At their approach Attila immediately raised the siege, sounded the trumpets to recall his troops from the gate of the city, for they had actually entered. His brave courage was guided by prudence, and he retreated till he reached the level plains of Chalons, whose surface was admirably adapted to the operations of his cavalry. Here he consulted his soothsayers, and they said they foretold his own defeat, with the death of his principal adversary, and he accepted the equivalent, the death of Ætius would be bought cheaply even for his defeat.

The nations from the Volga to the Atlantic were now ranged face to face, to dispute the empire of the world : the declining power of Rome together with the Goths, from its foes had become its best allies, were opposed to the hordes of Asiatic and European barbarians who fought for the "scourge of God." The last gleam of sunset fell on the arms of Rome, once victorious on so many bloody fields, and now victorious in a struggle for which they deserve the gratitude of all posterity. The battle was, however, gained through the valour of the Visigoths ; and King Theodoric, by his glorious death, fulfilled the prophecies of Attila's soothsayers.

The Huns were only saved by the approaching darkness, and retired within the circle of waggons which fortified their camp, while three hundred thousand slain, according to some authors, lay on the bloody field—a generation swept away in a day!

That night Attila collected all the spoil he had taken and the rich furniture of his cavalry into an immense pile, determined, if his entrenchments should be forced, to set it on fire and die in the flames, rather than fall by the hands of the foe or live in captivity.

But the allies respected the determination of their foe, and although some of the Goths were eager to storm the entrenchments, yet the prudence of Ætius led him to decline the assault, and suffer Attila and his Huns to retreat without molestation, and in due course to recross the Rhine. His retreat confessed the last victory won in the name of Rome. During its course he massacred alike his captives and hostages. Two hundred young maidens were tortured with cruel and unrelenting rage, and their unburied limbs abandoned on the public roads, a prey to dogs and vultures. So ended the invasion of Gaul.

In the ensuing spring, demanding in marriage the Princess Honoria, with an immense dowry, he revenged the rejection of his proposal by an invasion of Italy. Aquileia, then one of the richest cities in the Adriatic, was so completely destroyed that the succeeding generation could hardly discover its ruins. It was at this juncture that Venice was founded by fugitives from the Huns.

Destroying alike city and village, he advanced towards Rome, when Leo, exposing his life for the safety of his flock, embraced the resolution of seeking the conqueror and deprecating his wrath. In company with the ambassadors of Valentinian, he reached the host of Attila, as he lay encamped at the spot where the Mincius enters the lake Benacus, trampling with his Scythian horse the farms of Catullus and Virgil.

The pressing eloquence of Leo, his majestic aspect and sacerdotal robes, excited the veneration of Attila for the spiritual father of the Christians.

The apparition of the two apostles, S. Peter and S. Paul, who menaced the barbarian with instant death if he rejected the prayer of their successor, is (says Gibbon) one of the noblest legends of ecclesiastical tradition. He was reminded also that Alaric did not long survive the capture of the imperial city, and his mind, superior to physical danger, was not beyond the influence of supernatural terrors. He consented to receive the dowry of Honoria without the princess herself, and retired beyond the Danube.

Shortly after this event it pleased God to call Attila to his account. Forgetting Honoria, he added one Ildico, a beautiful barbarian, to the numerous list of his wives. On the morning after the nuptials, as he did not appear, they became alarmed, broke into the bed-chamber, and found the bride lamenting her own danger and the death of the king, who had expired during the night. An artery had suddenly burst, and the monarch had expired, suffocated appropriately by a torrent of blood. It was

reported at Constantinople, that on that happy night Marcian had beheld in a dream the bow of Attila broken asunder. They buried him with barbaric pomp and pagan rite, sacrificing human victims, and throwing the spoils of nations into his grave. But after his death the empire he had founded ceased to exist. Each chieftain became an independent potentate, and the sons of the conqueror fought for every province of Germany or Scythia.

The death of Attila was shortly followed by that of his great adversary Ætius, who was stabbed by Valentinian III. himself during a personal interview, in which his haughty language exasperated the feeble, yet vicious, prince, and the attendants completed the deed their royal master had begun.

Pierced by a hundred wounds, he died by the hands of the monarch whose throne he had saved; a bad, yet a great man, whose calm courage and prudent administration had for a short time delayed the fall of the Western Empire.

Vengeance, however, did not long slumber. On the sixteenth of March, A.D. 455, during some military sports, two of the domestics of Ætius, incited by one Maximus, whom the emperor had deeply injured, rushed suddenly upon the hapless, yet guilty Valentinian, and stabbed him to the heart, in the presence of his numerous train, not one of whom interfered.

Such was the end of the last Roman emperor of the family of the great Theodosius, a man who had inherited the vices, without the virtues, of his predecessors.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

### THE FALL OF THE WESTERN EMPIRE.

A.D. 455-476.

THE death of Valentinian was the immediate cause of the invasion of Italy and of the sack of Rome by a conqueror yet more terrible than Alaric, the Vandal Genseric. Having already acquired a fertile territory in Africa, which stretched along the coast for a distance which required ninety days to traverse, from Tangier to Tripoli, he formed the ambition of founding a great naval power, and after a lapse of six centuries, fleets again issued from Carthage to dispute with dying Rome the empire of the Mediterranean. Sicily fell as it had once before fallen beneath Carthaginian prowess; Palermo was sacked, and the coasts of the mainland already assailed, when the death of Valentinian took place.

Under the administration of that monarch, the Roman government had become every day less formidable to its foes, every day more oppressive to its unhappy subjects. Taxes were multiplied as poverty increased, and exacted both by the use of torture and the confiscation of goods; so that the poorer classes looked upon the barbarians as

their deliverers. Had all the Goths, Huns, and Vandals been swept from the earth, the empire must still have fallen beneath the weight of its crimes, and the utter corruption of every branch of the public service, from the imperial ministers to the lowest tax-gatherers.

Valentinian was succeeded by Maximus, who had instigated the murder of his predecessor; but the day of his accession was the last day of his happiness. "Oh, fortunate Damocles," he was once heard to exclaim, "thy reign began and ended with the same dinner!"

But he took the most fatal step when he forced Eudoxia, the widow of Valentinian, to marry him, while she suspected him of the crime which he had actually committed. Shortly after their marriage he confessed the fatal truth, and Eudoxia determined upon revenge. Conscious that she could not obtain aid from the East, she sacrificed her country to her private vengeance, and implored the aid of Genseric. The invitation was at once accepted with ferocious joy, and before Maximus knew his danger, the terrible Vandals were at the mouth of the Tiber, and he was aroused from his sleep by the clamours of the trembling and exasperated populace of the imperial city. The only hope which presented itself to him was flight, and he exhorted his senators to follow his example, and to leave the multitude to their fate. But no sooner did he appear in the streets to carry out this perfidious design than he was overwhelmed by a shower of stones, and his mangled body, torn almost out of human shape by the mob, who were led by the domestics of Eudoxia, was cast into the Tiber.

On the third day after the tumult, Genseric boldly

advanced from the port of Ostia to the gates of the defenceless city, when, instead of a sally of the Roman youth, there issued from the gates an unarmed and venerable procession, formed by S. Leo, at the head of his clergy. The fearless spirit of the venerable bishop, his eloquence, and his authority as the father of Western Christendom, prevailed over the ferocity of Genseric as it had formerly prevailed over that of Attila, and the Vandal promised to spare the unresisting, to protect the buildings from fire, and to exempt the captives from torture. The promise was fairly if not literally kept, and Rome again owed her deliverance to Christianity.

But her treasures of art, the accumulated spoil of ages, were now delivered to the Vandals, whose blind fury revenged the wrongs of the earlier Carthage. During the scenes of horror and woe which accompanied that awful devastation, six centuries earlier, Scipio, gazing upon the flames, is stated by Polybius to have repeated the well-known verses in which Hector prophesied the destruction of Troy, and to have added, "Troy was taken, Carthage is burning, Rome's turn may come next." The fulfilment of the foreboding had been long delayed, but it had come at last, and the avenger issued from Carthage.

Fourteen days and nights the pillage continued, and all that remained of public or private wealth, of sacred or profane treasure, was diligently transported on board the African ships.

Notably, the spoils of the Temple of Jerusalem, brought thence by Titus, including the seven-branched candlestick of gold, were transferred from Rome to Carthage; and so



rapacious were the barbarians that when they had removed the gold and silver of the imperial palace, they transported with great labour the brass and copper.

Eudoxia, the guilty cause of this devastation, advanced to meet Genseric as a friend and deliverer, but was rudely stripped of her jewels, and compelled, with her two daughters, to follow the haughty Vandal to Carthage as a captive, in company with thousands of her unhappy subjects, the unfeeling barbarians separating parents from children and wives from their husbands. When they had arrived at Carthage, laden with the spoils of Rome, the Vandals allowed their unhappy captives to suffer the extremities of hunger and thirst; the charity of Deogratias, the bishop of Carthage, was almost their sole support. This charitable bishop even sold the silver and gold vessels of the Church to provide for the necessities of his afflicted fellow-Christians—purchasing the freedom of some, and alleviating the slavery of others, while he assisted the wants and infirmities of a captive multitude. By his order, two spacious churches were converted into hospitals, the sick were distributed in convenient beds, and liberally supplied with food and medicine. The aged prelate repeated his visits, both by day and night, with an assiduity that surpassed his strength, and a tender sympathy which enhanced the value of his services.

From this period the glory of Rome was a dream of the past. She had permitted the barbarians, without any resistance, to plunder her capital of every article of luxury or art worth the trouble of removing. She had allowed her chosen citizens, the flower of her youth, to be

led into hopeless captivity, unable to raise an arm in their defence.

Eight sovereigns in succession called themselves emperors of Rome during the nineteen years succeeding the Vandal invasion, A.D. 457—476—Avitus, Majorian, Ricimer (or Severus), Anthemius, Olybrius, Glycerius, Nepos, and Augustulus. Twice during this period, under Majorian and Anthemius, attempts were made to recover Africa; for its loss was the loss of the very granary of the empire. On the second occasion, Leo, the emperor of the East, who had succeeded Marcian, lent the assistance of his fleet and army; but Genseric succeeded in destroying the former with fire-ships, and half the latter was left on the field of battle.

After the failure of this enterprise, the Vandals became the absolute masters of the Mediterranean, and the pirates of all nations took pay under their flag. Like the Northmen of the German Ocean, they kept the whole sea-coast in a perpetual state of terror, which did not cease till the Roman empire was no more. Before the death of Genseric, A.D. 477, in the fulness of years and warlike fame, he beheld the final extinction of the Empire of the West.

Augustulus, son of Orestes, was the last who bore the once proud title of emperor of Rome. Conquered by Odoacer, son of Edecon, king of a tribe of barbarians known as the Scyrri, he purchased an inglorious existence upon the condition of becoming the instrument of his own disgrace. He signified his resignation to the Senate, and under pressure from Odoacer, who had resolved to abolish the vain phantom of a Western Empire, the Senate wrote

to Zeno, now emperor of the East, disclaiming the wish to keep up any longer the shadow of an imperial succession in Italy. In their own name and that of the people, they expressed the desire that the seat of "universal empire" should be transferred to Constantinople. Zeno, after some demur, received the ambassadors, and consented to sanction their submission to Odoacer, who took the title of King of Italy. Odoacer propitiated the emperor with the present of the imperial ensigns, the sacred ornaments of the throne of the Cæsars; and the shadow of power departed, as the substance had long since departed, from the city of the seven hills.

The causes of the rise and progress of Rome, and of her ruin and decay, are the same which have similarly influenced the formation and decay of all the great nations of antiquity.

The arts of war, the practice of stern virtue, the self-denial, the heroic self-devotion and courage, by which Rome rose to fame, prostrated beneath her feet the necks of the kings of the earth. In the time of Augustus she sat supreme over the world, the mistress of the nations; but she had already begun to learn, from the effeminate races she had conquered, the arts of luxury and the unbounded sensuality which had worked their ruin, and having the power of unlimited indulgence in all that could minister to the lusts of depraved hearts, she utterly lost the purity which had distinguished her early citizens. The result was obvious. Her sons lost their manhood by degrees, until they paid barbarians to wield the weapons they could wield no longer for the defence of their country,

and fell at length by the hands of their savage allies and their kinsfolk.

Christianity had saved countless individuals from this miserable slavery to the flesh ; but it could not do more, for the state, nominally Christian, yet retained the worst abuses derived from the Pagan emperors, until finally the deserts yielded Goths, Huns, and Vandals like locusts, and the empire fell. Christianity had, however, reached and softened the rude conquerors, and if it could not avert destruction from the nation, it had at least broken the violence of the fall, and mollified the ferocious temper of the conquerors.

Before taking our leave of the secular history of the empire, so closely interwoven with the spiritual, it will be necessary to glance at the formation of the great future kingdoms of Britain, Gaul, and Spain.

Whilst the continents of Europe and Africa yielded an easy prey to the barbarians, the Britons, deserted by their Roman lords, and deprived of the flower of their youth, who had been drawn from the island to serve in foreign wars, maintained for upwards of a century a desperate struggle against the formidable pirates who assailed them on every side.

The cities, which had been fortified with great skill, were defended with stubborn resolution ; the advantages of ground, morass, or mountain, skilfully used ; and the numerous defeats of the Saxons, in spite of their overwhelming numbers, are sufficiently evident from the discreet silence of their annals, and the few authentic traditions which

survive to tell us how dearly our predecessors sold their lives and possessions. It took thirty-five years for Hengist to conquer Kent. The whole life of Cerdic barely sufficed for the conquest of Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, and when a century had elapsed, the Britons still possessed the whole extent of the Western Coast, from the wall of Antoninus to the extreme promontory of Cornwall; while many of the inland cities yet held out against our barbarous ancestors.

But resistance, if it cannot be successful, serves but to increase the miseries of the vanquished; and conquest has never been more dreadful than in the hands of the Saxons, who hated alike the valour and the Faith of their enemies.

The fields of battle might be traced by monuments of bones for generations. The fallen towers and walls were reddened by carnage, and the conquered who had the misfortune to survive the assault ruthlessly massacred, without distinction of age or sex, as at Anderida, the modern Pevensey, of which the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle tells us with dread simplicity: "This year (490) Ella and Cissa besieged Anderida (Andredes Ceaster), and slew all who dwelt there, so that not one Briton remained there alive."

After the destruction of the principal cities, the British bishops retired with their flocks, such at least as survived, to the fastnesses of the West. Even the remembrance of Christianity was abolished, and the land was again overspread with the dense darkness of heathenism.

The very language of the Romanized Britons seemed obliterated; the titles of honour, the political institutions, all disappeared, to be succeeded by the simple order

which had existed amongst the shepherds or pirates of Germany.

Far more mild and merciful was the fate of the inhabitants of Gaul. Their disposition was less warlike than that of the Britons, and they bent before the storm instead of resisting till they broke beneath it; so that by slow degrees the conquering Franks and the conquered Gauls became one people, and united to form the modern kingdom of France. The darkest hour Gaul ever knew was that of the "scourge of God," the ruthless Attila; but it passed away as we have related, and the formation of the future kingdom was at hand.

Clovis, king of the Franks, had married a Christian princess, Clotilda, a Catholic, and zealous for God; so that from the hour of her marriage she gave her whole thoughts to the conversion of her heathen husband, and wearied heaven with prayer.

At length, in the year 496, her labours were rewarded. In an hour of extreme danger, almost worsted in battle by the Alemanni, Clovis, like Constantine, vowed that if he obtained victory he would devote his future life to the God of Clotilda. A decisive victory followed, and the King of the Franks, with three thousand of his bravest warriors, was baptized by the Bishop S. Remigius in the cathedral of Rheims. So marvellously was he struck by the grandeur of the Catholic worship, by the mystic odour of incense, the wreathy clouds of perfumed smoke which veiled the altar, gleaming with its lights, and the solemn chant of the hymns, that he pressed the hand of the bishop with a visible tremour, and exclaimed, "Is this

heaven?" "No," replied Remigius, "but it is the portal thereof." As he baptized the king, he added the remarkable words, "Bow thy neck in meekness, worship that thou hast once burnt, burn that thou hast once worshipped."

It is again recorded that this founder of France, when S. Remigius read to him the story of the Passion from the gospels, broke out into the exclamation, "Would that I had been there with my gallant Franks! Speedily would I have avenged His wrongs." But although his conversion did not proceed from very enlightened motives, yet it was very sincere, and Christianity was restored, or rather preserved, to Gaul. His religious policy was chiefly directed by S. Remigius, who ruled the see of Rheims for no less than seventy-two years, dating from A.D. 462. The career of Clovis was one of almost unbroken conquest. At its commencement, when he succeeded his father as chief of the Salian Franks, the narrow limits of his dominion were confined to Batavia, Tournay, and Arras, and even at his baptism his army did not exceed the number of five thousand warriors. The victory over the Alemanni, which preceded his conversion, was followed by the annexation of their whole territory. But after his baptism, his career was one of rapid and almost unbroken conquest. The defeat of the Burgundians, whose territory then extended from the Vosges to the Mediterranean, led eventually to the incorporation of their whole dominions. His last victory expelled the Arian Visigoths from Gaul, save that they were allowed to retain a narrow strip of sea-coast from the mouth of the Rhine to the Pyrenees.

The emperor of the East bestowed upon Clovis the empty honour of Roman consulship, which, however, pacified his Gallic subjects, accustomed to regard that title with traditional reverence. Thus Clovis laid the foundations and became the first monarch of France, ruling over a territory even more extensive than the modern kingdom.

Our attention must next be given to Spain. The Visigoths, conquered by Clovis, had resigned their Gallic possessions, but they were amply compensated by the conquest and sure possession of the peninsula of Spain. Their predecessors, the Suevi and Vandals, were either expelled or permitted to remain as peaceable subjects, and for three centuries, until the overthrow of the Gothic monarchy by the Saracens, they remained in the secure enjoyment of peace and plenty.

Their voluntary conversion from the Arian heresy to the Catholic Faith took place in the reign of Recared, and from that time the Faith of Nicæa knew no stouter defenders. All the books containing the Arian heresies were reduced to ashes, and the ambassadors of the Spanish monarch bore magnificent gifts to the successor of S. Peter.

The state of the Church in Africa under the Vandals, at the period of the fall of the Western empire, was most grievous; the cruel task of subduing the religious belief of the whole population was seriously undertaken by Genseric and his successors.

In his early youth, that tyrant had forsaken the orthodox Faith, and the apostate, like most other apostates, hated the



Faith he had forsaken with a most bitter hatred. He was exasperated to feel that, although he had subdued the arms of the Africans in the field, he could not subdue their souls, and that those who had yielded before his secular weapons defied his spiritual ones.

During his whole life, his Catholic subjects were oppressed by sanguinary laws; but it was not until his death and the accession of his son, the infamous Hunneric, that the full fury of the storm broke upon the Faithful.

This infamous prince inherited all the vices without the redeeming qualities of Genseric, and his savage fury was fatal to his brother, his nephews, and the friends of his father.

At the beginning of his reign, however, he affected toleration; and the numerous conversions from Arianism which followed the ministrations of the Catholic bishop, Eugenius, terrified and enraged the Arians. Worsted in argument, they prevailed upon Hunneric to issue an edict that no Vandal should be allowed to enter the Catholic churches, and as the bishops declined to enforce it, upon the plea that the House of God was open to all, the tyrant stationed guards at the doors of the churches with instructions to scalp every Vandal who attempted to enter. Shortly afterwards, another edict deprived all Catholics of their civil offices, and a later one banished five thousand to a place in the deserts infested by venomous serpents, to which they were hurried with such cruelty that many died upon the road.

Another expedient suggested itself to the mind of Hunneric; he summoned nearly five hundred Catholic bishops to a conference with the Arians, on the 1st of February,

A.D. 484. On the preceding festival of the Epiphany, a blind man was said to have been miraculously restored to sight by the Catholic bishop, and the Faithful were much elated, while the Arians ascribed the miracle to magic.

In order to show the Catholics the fate in store for them if they did not submit, Hunneric ordered one of their number, named Lætus, to be burned alive before the opening of the conference.

When the day arrived, the Arian patriarch was given the office of president, to the great indignation of the Catholics, and it was soon manifest that he was only there to receive their expected submission; for he declined all controversy upon the plea that he could not speak Latin. Eugenius replied by a written profession of the Faith, and the meeting separated without any result.

Hunneric immediately confiscated all the Catholic churches; forbade any one to give those who remained faithful either food or lodging, under penalty of being burnt, with house and family; and commenced a most cruel and unsparing persecution. Respectable citizens and noble matrons were stripped naked, and raised in the air by pulleys, with a weight beneath their feet. In this painful attitude their naked bodies were torn by scourges, and burnt in the most tender parts with hot iron. The amputation of the ears, the nose, the tongue, and the right hand was frequently inflicted, and a bishop and proconsul suffered amongst other victims.

During this period, one of the most famous of the "ecclesiastical miracles" occurred at Tipsasa, a maritime colony of Mauritania, which had ever been distinguished by the

orthodox zeal of its inhabitants. At the approach of an Arian bishop, the town was deserted, all who could procure ships passing over into Spain; while the unhappy remnant, refusing all communion with the heretical bishop, held their assemblies for religious worship as before. Their disobedience exasperated the cruelty of Hunneric, and a military count was despatched from Carthage, who collected the Catholics in the Forum, and, in the presence of the multitude deprived them of their right hands and their tongues, when, to the astonishment of the persecutors, they continued to speak as before. This miracle is attested by Victor, an African bishop, who, writing within two years of the event, says: "If any one doubts of the truth, let him repair to Constantinople, and listen to the clear and perfect language of Restitutus, the sub-deacon, one of those glorious sufferers who is now lodged in the palace of the emperor Zeno." A Platonic philosopher, Æneas of Gaza, also says: "I saw them myself; I heard them speak; I diligently inquired by what means such an articulate voice could be formed without any organ of speech. I used my eyes to examine the report of my ears. I opened their mouth, and saw that the whole tongue had been completely torn away by the roots—an operation which the physicians generally suppose to be mortal." This testimony is confirmed by the superfluous evidence of an edict of the emperor Justinian, and of many other contemporary writers.\*

Shortly afterwards, while the persecution was at its height, Hunneric died of a loathsome disease, and the persecution ceased.

\* Gibbon, chap. xxvii.

But the Vandals still continued Arian, and the persecution revived at intervals with varying intensity, until their dominion was completely overthrown, A.D. 534, by Belisarius, the general of Justinian, the great emperor of the East.

From this time the Arian heresy ceased to exert any influence upon Christendom, and, oppressed alike by the weight of Catholic truth and the force of example, nation after nation adopted the Faith of Nicæa.

Such was the case with the Burgundians, under their king Sigismund; the Suevi, under Theodimir; and the Spanish Visigoths, as we have already seen, under Recared.

The last people who made a national profession of Arianism were the Lombards of Italy; but the exertions of Gregory the Great, the spiritual father of *English* as distinct from *British* Christianity, led to their conversion, and the Arian controversy was terminated after a war of nearly three centuries.

Here we must close our historical labours. The growth and progress of the Church amongst the various nations of Europe, then commencing their early career, and laying the foundations of their modern greatness, is beyond the scope of the present work.

## CHAPTER XXV.

### SUPPLEMENTARY.

WE have now traced the rise and progress of Christianity from the Day of Pentecost until the fall of that mighty empire under whose shadow it arose. We have beheld it victorious both over that empire and over the barbarians, by whom its mighty social fabric was shattered; and we have now, in conclusion, to glance briefly at the doctrine, worship, and ritual of the Church during the days of the first four general councils, and at the close of the period we have had under our consideration.

The limits of the Church had continued to extend themselves, as we have seen, during the whole of the ecclesiastical and political troubles of the age, until they comprised the whole territory once under the sway of Rome; and it is singular that the power of Catholic Christianity should have coincided so nearly with the former jurisdiction of the empire. Beyond that limit Christianity existed, it is true, but it was not as a rule Catholic Christianity. It would, nevertheless, be most unfair to undervalue the self-denying labours of those Nestorian missionaries by whom, as we have seen, the

Faith was preached throughout Asia, and whose spiritual organization comprised no less than twenty-five provinces, while it numbered its children by tens of millions. The natural antipathy of Persia to Rome led her not only to tolerate, but even to patronize, the Nestorian form of Christianity, while she persecuted the Catholic Faith.

The growth of the mighty spiritual power of the papacy may well arrest our attention.

There were in the fifth century, after Chalcedon, five great patriarchs, possessing extensive jurisdiction—those of Rome, Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem. To these, Oriental writers add a sixth, the patriarch of Seleucia; but this see, as we have narrated, was separated from the unity of the Church, and became the headquarters of Nestorianism.

The patriarchs were distinguished by special prerogatives attached to their high stations. They consecrated the bishops in the provinces under their jurisdiction; they had power to judge all controversies and disputes arising amongst ecclesiastics within their limits, and to convoke synods of their suffragans to discuss provincial affairs; and they appointed vicars, or deputies, vested with their authority to represent their power in the extremities of their dominion. Often their influence, as in the case of Cyril of Alexandria, was greater, even in affairs of state, than that of the Roman governors, and the only restraining power lay in the imperial authority on the one hand, and the appeal to a general council on the other—an appeal we have often had occasion to consider in the course of our history.

But of all these patriarchates, none was so mighty or so favoured by circumstances as Rome. The political greatness of the city in which the popes had their seat was, perhaps, the chief cause in the first instance, and appears to have been recognized as such at Chalcedon, which gave the second rank to Constantinople as a new Rome.

But the great Roman pontiff, Leo, did not permit this assumption to pass unchallenged, and boldly claimed supremacy as being the successor of S. Peter, the prince of the Apostles, upon whom, as upon a rock, the Church was built—an interpretation of a much-disputed text which did not, even in those days, pass unchallenged. Other circumstances had also united in strengthening the influence of the mighty see—its occupants had escaped the deadly pit-falls of heresy into which one or other of the patriarchs of the East had fallen. Nestorius of Constantinople had been deposed and excommunicated by one general council, Dioscorus of Alexandria by another; but on each occasion Rome had espoused the cause of orthodoxy; and Cyril of Alexandria and Flavian of Constantinople had alternately rejoiced in the support of Celestine and Leo; thus Rome had gained a kind of supremacy over each of these great sees.

Its apostolic origin, then universally recognised, the number of its bishops who had sealed the Faith with their blood, and chiefly its singular freedom from heresy, had all conspired to unite with political forces in paving its way to universal empire, wider and grander far than the Cæsars had enjoyed—a power which had, doubtless,

its providential use, although we cannot concede that it was of Divine right.

Thus it formed the chief rallying-point of the Italian people at that fearful crisis when the sceptre dropped from the nerveless hand of the Cæsars; and it was Leo, not those vain shadows of former power, the emperors, who made terms with Attila and Genseric. Thus the papacy became a centre of unity when the empire was crumbling to pieces; and the missionary bishops, who converted barbarian nations, equally with their converts, learned to seek spiritual aid from the mighty Father of Western Christendom.

Again, as we have already observed, the downfall of the Church of Africa, noted for her proud spirit and independence, manifested in Cyprian when he contended with pope Stephen, or in those bishops who denied the right of Zosimus to acquit Pelagius, removed the only obstacle in the path of Rome to supreme power in the West. The case of Apiarius, an African presbyter, whom Zosimus had received into communion after he had been deposed by an African council, sufficiently shows how stubborn their resistance was, and how great a barrier it must have proved to the growth of Roman supremacy. The African fathers wrote to Celestine (for Zosimus and his successor, Boniface, had both died while the case was pending) desiring him that he would not for the future give ear to complaints from Africa, nor admit those to communion whom they had excommunicated, which he might, they said, easily perceive was contrary to the canons of Nicæa; for the Nicene fathers had wisely and justly decided that



all controversies should be ended in the provinces where they arose.\* From this it is evident that the claims of modern Rome were not put forward or acknowledged at the period in question, and even at a later period, we find S. Gregory disclaiming the title of universal bishop, and the British bishops disclaiming his supremacy.

The progress of Monasticism had been very great during this period, and as the monks were chiefly under the direction of the patriarchs, their influence had greatly tended to promote the despotic power wielded by a Cyril for good, or a Dioscorus for evil. The knowledge of the monastic life was introduced into Rome by S. Athanasius, who brought thither several of the followers of S. Antony, whose strange appearance at first excited horror and contempt, which afterwards yielded to admiration and imitation; so that Rome, which in her pagan days could barely support the institution of six vestals, was now surrounded by monasteries, seated on the ruins of ancient temples.

Hilarion, a Syrian youth, fixed his abode on a sandy beach near Gaza, and by startling austerities drew around him, after the lapse of years, two or three thousand followers.

S. Basil, as we have already related, left Athens to retire to the savage solitudes of Pontus, and spiritual colonies sprang up around him in all directions. S. Martin established the monastic system in Gaul, and two thousand monks followed him to the grave. In Egypt, the

\* Bingham, ix. 1.

followers of Antony and Pachomius became, it was said, the majority of the population, and the deserts became vocal with the praises of God. Even beyond the tropic, the sun-burnt sands of Ethiopia were tenanted by solitaries, and in the far north-west, S. Patrick introduced the same system into Ireland, whence, in after years, Irish monks, under S. Columba, evangelized Scotland. In short, the progress of Monasticism was co-extensive with that of Christianity.

The original dress of the monks was that of the peasants of their day, which, being retained when the fashions changed, became at last a distinctive habit. The sumptuous buildings which in mediæval days contained the devotees had not yet arisen; their original cells were low, narrow huts, built of the slightest materials, which formed, by the regular distribution of the streets, a large and populous village, inclosing, within the common wall, church, hospital, library, offices, garden, and fountain or spring of fresh water. Thirty or forty brethren composed a family of separate discipline or diet, and the great Egyptian monasteries numbered from thirty to forty families.\*

The austere monks commonly slept on the ground on a hard mat or rough blanket, and the same bundle of palm leaves served as a seat by day and a pillow by night. Their rules of abstinence were not uniform or perpetual; the stern discipline of Lent was balanced by the cheerful festivities of Easter or Pentecost, and great allowances were made for the inhabitants of northern climates; for it was allowed that an indulgence of appetite, which would be pardonable in a Gaul, was gluttony in an Egyptian. The

\* See Gibbon, chap. xxxvii., from whom this account is in part abridged.

brethren were supported by their manual labour; gardens and fields were cultivated by their industry. In later ages, their skill in copying manuscripts kept the knowledge of ancient literature alive for a future generation, and posterity must gratefully acknowledge that the monuments of Greek and Roman genius owe their present existence to their indefatigable pens. But the more humble industry of the early Egyptian monks was contented with weaving the leaves of the palm tree into mats and baskets, which were sent down the Nile as far as Alexandria, and supplied the monks with the means of existence and of charity.

Their lives were thus passed in solitude, varied by the continual recurrence of religious services. At their silent meals, their cowls hid their faces from each other. Their work during the day was accompanied, their repose at night interrupted, by vocal or mental prayer. In the silence of the Egyptian night the rustic horn blew the signal of devotion, when the stars indicated the appointed hour; and in times of Arian persecution the same signal summoned them frequently for self-defence; so that the imperial soldiers repeatedly observed that they would sooner face the fiercest barbarians than the monks, when once determined upon resistance.

But the most marvellous phenomenon of the age was the existence of the pillar saints, amongst whom Simeon Stylites is most conspicuous. At the age of thirteen, this young Syrian deserted the profession of a shepherd, and entered a neighbouring monastery. After a long and painful novitiate, in which his superiors often had to interfere for the protection of his life against the effects of extra-

vagant austerities, he established his residence on a mountain, east of Antioch. Within the space of a circle of stones, to which he had attached himself by a chain, he ascended a column which he successively raised from the height of nine to that of sixty feet above the ground. The fame of his austerities caused multitudes to flock around him. Tribes of Ishmaelites, amongst whom other missionaries had laboured in vain, were entranced by this instance of self-mortification, and heard from his lips the message they had despised when brought them by others. "Multitudes of Arabs," says Theodoret of Cyrus, "who had been enslaved in the darkness of sin, were enlightened from that pillar. For this most shining light, set as upon a candlestick, cast its beams around as a sun, and Iberi, Persians, and Armenians came and were baptised. Coming in tribes, the Arabs renounced with acclamations the errors of their ancestors. Breaking their images, and renouncing their heathen rites, they received the blessed sacraments and accepted the Divine laws from that holy tongue."

In this lofty station Simeon spent thirty years, enduring the heat of the Syrian sun and the colds of the winter nights. The progress of an ulcer in the thigh perhaps shortened, but did not impede, this aerial life, in the course of which kings and queens bowed down before him, the emperors sent to consult him on affairs of state, men brought their disputes to await his decision, congregations assembled twice daily to hear his exhortations, and whole nations were evangelized.

The patient hermit died, without descending from his column, in the year 460, at the age of seventy-two, and a

procession, in which all the dignity and wealth of the empire was represented, bore his hallowed relics to Antioch as her choicest treasure.

It is very hard in these days to appreciate the motives which led men to adopt and which perhaps seemed to justify such fearful austerities. The severity with which they afflicted their bodies and denied every natural appetite is even startling; but it was perhaps the natural reaction from the fearful profligacy into which the civilized world had fallen—profligacy which had overspread every rank and condition of life, and from which it seemed simply impossible to escape in the world; it had become the very atmosphere men breathed. The clergy of the cities (or secular clergy) were quite unable to cope with this deadly evil, the result of centuries of misgovernment and moral pollution; and although they led lives of strict morality themselves, yet they seemed powerless to stem the torrent of evil.

The hopelessness of escaping such pollution in the world made the multitude shrink, as we have often seen, from baptism itself, until death stared them in the face; but there were a few who saw plainly that this was but a rank evasion of man's duty to his Maker, an attempt to give Him the dregs of a life, while the full cup had been given to Satan. But what could they do? they feared that baptism would but intensify that sin which seemed unavoidable in the world.

One avenue of escape presented itself—the monastic life and the deserts, and they fearlessly embraced it; and the men who thus gave up all for God were the noblest spirits of their age—men with whom the secular clergy,

who are now reckoned with the saints, spent their apprenticeship, like S. Chrysostom, before they returned to fight the battle of God in the world.

From the time that Christianity became the established religion of the Roman empire, it appeared to be the natural impulse of the Faithful to lavish their riches upon the House of God and its services, following not merely the precedent of the earlier dispensation, but the same holy instinct which led Mary to anoint the Saviour's Feet with the precious ointment. Many of the basilicas in which the Faithful had once stood before their heathen judges, to suffer torment cheerfully for the sake of their Lord, were now given to the Church as having been consecrated by their sufferings, and were adapted to the worship of God, the apse where the magistrates had sat serving for the sanctuary, and the altar being placed on the chord of the apse, with the seat of the bishop immediately behind it, and those of the presbyters on his right hand and on his left, so as to form together a semicircle. It was customary in these churches for the celebrant in the Holy Mysteries to stand behind the centre of the altar, facing the people, while in other churches, wherein the altars were differently arranged he stood in front, facing eastward; for it was a custom from the earliest ages to build churches towards the East.

The altars in the East were veiled from view by a curtain, which was withdrawn after the consecration. Thus, S. Chrysostom says, "When the Sacrifice is brought forth, when Christ, the Lamb of God, is offered, then think that you

see the heavens opened, and the angels of God descending from above." In the West, the altar was visible as with us. The lights over the altar were commonly suspended from the ceiling, so that the sanctuary of a church is compared by some poetical writers of antiquity to the heavens glittering with stars. At a very early period the sacred vessels were frequently composed of gold.

The whole sanctuary, separated by the veil, or sometimes by rails of wood, arranged, much like modern chancel-screens, in the form of net-work, was inaccessible to the laity during divine service, as we learn from Eusebius. The woodwork was called "cancelli," whence the modern English word chancel.

Until the time of Constantine altars were generally of wood, and even afterwards, since S. Augustine, telling us of the outrages committed by the Donatists, mentions their beating a Catholic bishop with the broken pieces of the altar.

But a few years later they were all but universally made of stone, so that a Gallic council, A.D. 509, forbids any altars to be consecrated "save those of stone." No doctrine appears to have been involved in the change, so far as the records of those ages supply information.

In the first ages there was only one altar in each church. "One altar in the church and one bishop" was the maxim of S. Ignatius, a custom the Greeks have retained. Some writers even suppose that originally there was but one altar in each city, as only one baptistery; but this is very doubtful, and could only prevail when the number of the Faithful was small.

The nave of the church was usually a square building, between the *narthex*, or porch, and the sanctuary. Immediately at the entrance the *substrati*, or penitents of the third order, worshipped, who as it has been previously mentioned, derived their name from their custom of prostrating themselves after the sermon, during the prayers and benediction which was given them by the bishop or presiding minister after the "Missa Catechumenorum" was ended. There was the *ambo*, or pulpit, whence the Epistles and Gospels, and the Diptychs, were read. Sermons were more commonly preached from the steps of the sanctuary, as Valerius observes. Above the ambo, the fourth order of penitents, the *consistentes*, had their place, so called because they were allowed to remain during the celebration, although they were not permitted to communicate.

The places of men and women were kept distinct by means of wooden screens, as S. Chrysostom mentions; but in some churches the women worshipped in galleries set apart for that purpose. Around the nave were sometimes built small cells, called *cubicula*, or little chambers, as we learn from S. Paulinus of Nola, who tells us that their use was for those who wished to retire for reading, meditation, or private prayer.

The narthex, porch, or ante-temple, served to receive the first class of penitents, the *lugentes*, as also the second, or *audientes*, who were allowed to hear the Psalms sung and the Scriptures read, after which they were dismissed, the sermon being ended, without any benediction.

An outer court, or *atrium*, surrounded by cloisters, generally had its place in front of the church, and the



privileges of sanctuary were extended to this inclosure in the days of the Christian emperors.

In the centre of this court stood the fountain or cistem of water, commonly called "*cantharus*," as a symbol of purification. It was a popular custom to wash or lave the hands in this fountain before entering the church. These courts were eventually used for burying-grounds, hence the origin of "churchyards."

The *baptistery* was for many ages reckoned amongst the "*exedrae*," or outbuildings belonging to the church, and therefore was ordinarily a separate building, as is still the case in some Italian cathedrals. These baptisteries were necessarily spacious, since the stated times of baptism recurred but seldom, and multitudes were baptized at the same time; while the custom of baptizing by immersion rendered a large font or pool of water necessary. There was originally, it would appear, but one place of baptism for a whole city—the baptistery of the cathedral or bishop's church.

In addition to these several parts of the ancient churches, there were other *exedrae*, which were considered a part of the church in the largest sense of the word, and had the privileges of sanctuary. Such was the *diaconicum* or vestry, occasionally called the *receptorium*, because the clergy there received such as came to consult them; the *decanica*, where, it appears, from a law of Justinian, offending clerks were confined; and the schools, libraries, and clergy houses, to all of which the privilege of sanctuary was extended by the great Theodosius.

The first detailed accounts of the consecration of churches

are of the date of the fourth century, although there can be no question that the Christians of the first three centuries used similar forms, of which the details have not survived. Magnificent ceremonial became customary after the accession of Constantine. Thus the Church of Jerusalem, built over our Lord's sepulchre, was consecrated, as it will be remembered, by the full synod of bishops, who had assembled at Tyre A.D. 335, and whom Constantine called to Jerusalem for this purpose.

We may now venture to describe in fuller detail the celebration of the Holy Eucharist. We have already given some account of the four primitive liturgies from which all the liturgies of mediæval and modern times were derived. Varying in detail, they contained, as we have seen, the same salient features of apostolic origin, and were alike divided into two parts, the "Missa Catechumenorum" and the "Missa Fidelium."\*

The introductory portion consisted of certain prefatory prayers and intercessions; the Introit, or Psalm for the day; the "Little Entrance," or bringing the Book of the Gospels in solemn procession to the altar; the hymn, "*Holy God, Holy and Mighty, Holy and Immortal, have mercy upon us,*" called the *Trisagion*; after which followed the Epistle and Gospel, sometimes preceded by readings from the Old Testament, particularly from the writings of the prophets.

Proper Lessons, Epistles and Gospels, were already appointed for the ecclesiastical year, the arrangement being much the same as in the present Book of Common

\* Pp. 204, 205.

Prayer. During the reading of the Gospels, S. Jerome tells us that lights were uplifted.

Sermons were generally preached before the dismissal of the Catechumens. They were commonly short and incisive. Hundreds of them taken down by notaries are preserved to us. Many of those preached by S. Augustine might be delivered in eight minutes; but the Eastern fathers, especially S. Chrysostom, preached at much greater length. In the Roman Church there was, strange to say, no public preaching till the time of S. Leo.

After the sermon, all Jews and unbelievers, and those amongst the catechumens and penitents—who were numbered amongst the "*audientes*," were bidden to withdraw. The *substrati* still remained, for whom special prayers were made; after which they were dismissed with a benediction, and the "*Missa Fidelium*" began.

At this solemn service only the baptized in full communion, and the fourth order of penitents, the "*consistentes*," were present. It commenced with the "Great Entrance," or the carrying the oblations in solemn procession to the altar. We learn from the Apostolic Constitutions that no priest or bishop might present anything in the sacrifice other than bread, and wine mingled with water, excepting the first-fruits of grapes and corn, oil for the lamps about the altar, and incense at the time of the oblation. Later in history, money and other gifts were received at the altar. In the East the bread was leavened; in the West, unleavened.

The Nicene Creed followed, in the Liturgy of S. James, but had a different position in some other liturgies. It

was first introduced into the services of the Church at Antioch in the year 471. In the Liturgy of S. Mark, the "kiss of peace" preceded the Creed, but in that of S. James, it followed it. The bishop or celebrant saluted the people with, "*Peace be with you.*" They replied, "*And with thy spirit.*" The deacon cried, "*Salute one another with a holy kiss;*" whereupon the various members of the congregation, in their respective places, saluted each other.

Shortly afterwards the elements were solemnly unveiled, the "Prayer of the Veil" said, and the *Anaphora* or canon began; the great Eucharistic prayer, introduced by the words, "*Lift up your hearts,*" and containing the Preface, the Ter Sanctus, the Commemoration of our Lord's Life, the words of Institution (in a louder tone), the Prayer of Oblation, wherein the "*Awful and unbloody Sacrifice*" was offered to God, and—at least in all Eastern Liturgies—the "Invocation of the Holy Spirit" to make the bread the "Holy Body," and the cup the "Precious Blood of Christ," This completed the act of consecration.

The Great Intercession now followed, containing petitions for the whole Church militant on earth, or expectant in Paradise, that the Living might obtain all needful graces and blessings, and the Faithful departed rest and peace. This part of the service concluded with the "*Embolismus,*" or prayer against temptation.

The "Communion" began with the "Prayer of Intense Adoration," which has its place in all Eastern liturgies. The elevation of the consecrated gifts, with the cry, "*Holy things for holy persons,*" the solemn breaking of the bread, and the mixture of a fragment in the chalice followed;

after which the communion first of the celebrant, then of the priests, deacons, sub-deacons, readers, singers, ascetics, deaconesses, virgins, widows, children, and of the people in order took place, during which time the 34th and other Psalms were commonly sung.

The ordinary form of administration was simply with the words, "The Body of Christ, the Blood of Christ," to which the communicant replied, "Amen." We learn the mode of reception from S. Cyril's Catechetical Instructions. "Make," he says, "thy left hand, as it were, a throne for thy right, which is to receive thy King, and having opened thy palm, receive on it the body of Christ."

The prayer of thanksgiving and the dismissal concluded the service, of which we have only been able to sketch the main outlines. The arrangement of the various portions, it must be remembered, differed slightly in the various liturgies; thus, in that of S. Peter, which became the foundation of the present Roman Missal, the Invocation of the Holy Ghost is supposed to have preceded the words of Institution.

As the ancient discipline, which we have previously described,\* became gradually relaxed, which must of necessity have been the result of the admission of the world into the Church, consequent upon the adoption of Christianity by the state, the distinction between the various classes of penitents became gradually effaced, and the substitution of private confession for public penance in the days of S. Leo greatly hastened its abolition; while

\* Pp. 209-211.

at the same time the practice of infant baptism, becoming general, lessened the class of catechumens.

Therefore, in the very next age to the one under our consideration, as we are informed by Bingham,\* it became customary for the whole congregation, save the excommunicate, to remain until after the Lord's Prayer and the benediction, which was not given till after the consecration was completed. Thus the council of Agde, A.D. 506., gives special order that all secular men should stay to hear mass, and not depart before the blessing; and the council of Orleans bade people not depart till the solemnity of the mass was ended.

The transition was not an unnatural one; men who felt themselves unworthy of such frequent communion would far more naturally remain with the *consistentes* than depart as if excommunicate, and the number of such persons must have been gradually increasing, until it prepared the way for the recognition of the change by the Church.

We learn from S. Augustine that in many churches celebrations took place daily, in others on each Sunday and festival, the minimum being each Sunday, which day was even known as the "Day of Bread."

We have already seen† that the reservation of the consecrated elements for the sick, or for prisoners in the days of persecution, was customary from the beginning, and that in places where there was no daily celebration it was common to allow the Faithful to carry a portion of the consecrated Gifts home for the purpose of daily Com-

\* Antiquities, b. xv. s. 2.

† Page 206.

munion. The obvious danger of irreverence led to the early discontinuance of the latter practice.

It also appears from abundant testimony, that as the Church admitted infants to Confirmation after Baptism, so she also admitted them to Communion. S. Cyprian mentions this as the common practice, and the Apostolical Constitutions bade mothers bring their children with them. This custom continued in some parts of the Western Church till the twelfth century, and still exists in the conservative Eastern Church.

Many ceremonial adjuncts, which had probably existed in a more or less modified degree from the beginning, now became of universal observance. Prominent amongst these was the use of *incense* and of *lighted tapers* or lamps in the day time. We have already remarked that the Apostolic Constitutions include "oil for the lamps and incense" amongst the permitted oblations. Tertullian mentions the use of the latter at funerals; and it is mentioned by S. Ambrose as an ordinary adjunct to the Christian Sacrifice, while, as we have also seen, lighted tapers, as significant of Him Who is the Light of the world are mentioned by S. Jerome as being used at the reading of the Gospel, while S. Paulinus of Nola speaks of "lights burning upon the altar of S. Felix night and day."

Special vestments were probably in use from the days of S. John, of whom primitive writers, as we have already related,\* tell us that he assumed the long white robe and mitre peculiar to the Jewish priesthood after the destruction of Jerusalem; but after the period of perse-

\* Page 49. See Eusebius, b. v. cap. 24.

cution ceased, the evidence concerning their use becomes distinct and abundant. Theodoret tells us of a rich vestment, embroidered with gold, given by Constantine the Great to Macarius. S. Athanasius was accused by his enemies of taxing the Egyptians to raise a fund for providing his clergy with linen vestments. S. Jerome tells us that the clergy had one habit for the ministry, another mode of dress for ordinary life; and Sozomen tells us that in the riots excited by the enemies of S. Chrysostom, the priests and deacons were driven from the Church arrayed in the vestments of their ministration.\*

The Council of Laodicea speaks of the *orarium* or stole, which the priests (we are elsewhere informed) wore over *both* shoulders, the deacons over the *left* shoulder only, and the fourth Council of Carthage mentions the use of the alb.

Later the Council of Toledo mentions the stole, ring, and pastoral staff of the bishop, the stole and *planeta*, or chasuble of the priest, the stole and alb of the deacon; while the use of the dalmatic by the deacons is mentioned in S. Augustine's works, and the use of the tunicle by all the clergy, is noted by many authors.

Derived, as many of these ceremonies obviously were, from the analogy of the olden dispensation, it is a gratuitous assumption to ascribe their origin to an imitation of the pagan worship. The ritual of the Church in her poverty was of necessity simpler than when "kings became her nursing fathers, and queens her nursing mothers;" but the difference was only one of degree, not of principle. It is true that many burdensome ceremonies,

\* See Bingham, b. xiii. cap. 8.



since wisely discontinued, existed in those days, to which S. Augustine makes allusion in a well-known passage, in which he speaks of the state of Christians as being worse than that of the Jews; but the attentive reader will perceive, in perusing the passage in question,\* that the remark is aimed at such weak superstition as, amongst other things, would forbid the newly-baptized to set bare foot to the ground within the octave of their baptism, not at the ordered ceremonial of the Church.

The ancient custom of burning the bodies of the dead was at once rejected by Christians, from natural feelings of reverence. The corpse was duly washed and anointed, and, in imitation of the Burial of our Lord, wound in linen, with spices and sweet ointments. It was then placed upon the bier, lights were burned around it, while psalms, hymns, and prayers for the repose of the deceased were repeated, until it was transferred in solemn procession to the grave, preceded by lights, palm branches, and incense.

A funeral celebration usually preceded the actual interment; and it would appear, from the touching account left us by S. Augustine of the burial of his mother, Monica, that it took place in the cemetery itself, probably in a mortuary chapel. Here, upon the anniversary of the death, the relations met at the grave, the Eucharistic Sacrifice was offered, alms were given in the name of the deceased, and prayers offered for his admission to a place of refreshment, light, and peace.

Such prayers were, of course, supposed to be only avail-

\* See Preface to the Book of Common Prayer, and S. Aug. ep. 55, ad Jan. cap. cxix.

able for those who had died in faith, and who, according to the prevalent opinion, were passing through a period of purification, preparatory to their admission to the fulness of bliss. S. Augustine speaks of such prayers and sacrifices as thanksgivings for those who have departed this life in the highest degree of grace: sources of refreshment to those who have departed in an inferior degree: and if useless to those who are severed from hope, yet consolations to the living.\*

From the beginning, Christians had always believed and taught that the martyrs interceded before God for their brethren, as is evident from the touching inscriptions in the catacombs, and the frequent epitaph, "May'st thou rest in peace, and pray for us." It was customary, as in Carthage, in the days of S. Cyprian, for the Faithful to beg the martyrs before their sufferings to intercede for them when in the presence of the Lord, and great confidence was placed in their intercessions. But, in addition to this earlier belief, it became now commonly supposed and taught that the saints departed were in some manner cognizant of prayers addressed to them, especially of the prayers poured forth at their shrines, and their aid as intercessors was now invoked by fervent and assiduous prayers. Naturally, this led to the promotion of pilgrimage to the various shrines; and from all quarters of the Christian world multitudes flocked to the scenes hallowed by the blood of the martyrs and the scenes of the Lord's earthly life, so that Palestine became crowded by devout travellers. The heathen were astonished and even scan-

\* *Encheiridion*, cap. cx.

dalized to behold emperors, consuls, and generals prostrate at the tombs of "fishermen and tentmakers," or to behold their hallowed relics translated, with all the pomp of incense and song, to repose beneath the altars of distant churches. "Infamous malefactors," says the Pagan En-napius, speaking of the martyrs, "whose bodies yet bear the marks and scars of the tortures inflicted upon them by the magistrate, are the 'gods' the earth produces in these days." Relics were, of course, plentiful in days so immediately succeeding the persecutions, but many of the Faithful were favoured by dreams, in which the places were revealed which were honoured by the burial of a saint or martyr. Thus the relics of S. Stephen were discovered and removed from Jerusalem to be distributed in all provinces of the Christian world. S. Augustine himself attests the miracles performed by them in Africa, enumerating seventy in the space of two years, and within the limits of his diocese, solemnly declaring that he has only selected those prodigies attested by the objects or eye-witnesses of their miraculous efficacy. It is a common error to charge the mediæval Church of Rome with originating the superstitious veneration of relics. She but *inherited* it, and in a modified degree, from the Church of the days of Theodosius, when the remains of prophet after prophet and patriarch after patriarch were made known by dream after dream. Nor were these discoveries confined to the relics of Christian martyrs and saints. Micah, Habakkuk, Samuel, and Joseph left their graves to enrich the altars of Christian churches. It is needless to add that such tendencies afforded ample scope

for imposition; and we are told that S. Martin, coming once to the shrine of a supposed martyr, forced the original owner of the relics to appear—a shade of ferocious appearance—who confessed that he was a robber who had been executed for his numerous crimes.

The love of pilgrimage had doubtless its good effects in promoting intercourse, and even commerce, between distant nations; but we learn with astonishment that the uncritical devotion of some even led them to make pilgrimages into Arabia, to behold the dunghill upon which Job sat, and obtain the intercession of the saint. The whole tendency of the Arian and Nestorian controversies had been to lead men to the contemplation of the Divinity of the Saviour. His Humanity, which those heretics brought into perhaps undue prominence, was by a natural reaction almost ignored in turn, and the void thus created in the heart was supplied by the excessive honours paid to the saints, amounting in some cases, as S. Augustine reluctantly confesses, to worship.

Christian art had of course developed greatly in the sunshine of prosperity. The quarrelsome Epiphanius of Salamis did indeed tear a curtain embroidered with images of the saints, when he came to the Holy Land and commenced the Origenistic controversy; but the whole tendency of the age was against him.\* It was felt that the very principle of the Incarnation, whereby God was revealed to man, justified representations of the Incarnate God, the prohibition of such images or pictures under the

\* See page 357.

olden dispensation being grounded upon the fact that no image or similitude had been revealed upon the mount, nor could material representations do aught but degrade the conception of the Godhead.

But of the Sacred *Manhood* "which," as S. John says, speaking for himself and his contemporaries, "we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled," representations were blamelessly made, although it was not till the end of the fourth century that isolated figures of our Lord or the saints became common, and the crucifix was hardly known, although one in the Museum at Florence is ascribed to this century. Its place was supplied by the Cross, which at a very early period surmounted the Christian altar; so that the apostate Julian charged the Christians with worshipping it.

Yet the Cross was still associated with the sorrow of Calvary rather than with the triumph over the powers of hell; and the strains of the "*Vexilla Regis*" or the "*Pange Lingua*," in which the *victory* of the Cross is the theme, represented the feelings of a later age. It was a touching sight to those who had perhaps beheld living bodies writhing on rude wooden crosses, to see the symbol of the death of the slave surrounded by gold and gems, and when the knee was bent before the outward sign, that proud Roman spirit must have been indeed humbled. Crucifixion as a mode of punishment almost vanished, after Constantine, from the imperial code.

The Nestorian controversy naturally brought the Blessed Virgin into prominence, and figures of the "Virgin and

Child" became the ordinary ornaments of churches ; yet the extravagant teaching of modern Rome upon her position in the economy of grace, found no place in the early ages, many of the passages commonly ascribed to S. Augustine and others, being now acknowledged as interpolations.

With the conquest of the empire learning generally declined, and the arts and literature of imperial Rome passed into a state of oblivion, from which they were only rescued in the period of the renaissance immediately preceding the Reformation.

The savage barbarians who conquered the provinces of Rome, and then embraced the religion of the conquered, were quite content to leave the culture of the sciences, and even the familiar arts of reading and writing as the peculiar appanage of the clergy ; so that in later days the mere capability of reading placed its possessor amongst those entitled to the "benefit of clergy." In the East the state of learning was less deplorable, and the schools of Alexandria, Constantinople, and Edessa were long famous amongst the lovers of poetry, philosophy, and eloquence.

By degrees the Platonic philosophy, under which the greatest scholars of the Christian Church had been trained, and which was supposed to be the most akin to Christianity, lost its pre-eminence, and the philosophy of Aristotle took its place, until it attained that proud pre-eminence in the republic of letters and the realm of theology, which it held in the middle ages under the schoolmen.

No philosophy was so proper to furnish weapons against Nestorian or Eutychian heresy as that of Aristotle, while the Pelagian doctrines bore a striking resemblance to the

theories of the Platonists concerning God and the human soul. But the famous sect of the Neoplatonists, which for a series of ages had produced divisions in the Christian Church, received its death-blow when the emperor Justinian, in his zeal for Christian orthodoxy, closed the schools of Athens, and prohibited the teaching of philosophy in its chosen seat. It was the death-blow to pagan learning and to its offspring, Neoplatonism. In their despair the banished professors sought refuge in Persia, but found little encouragement. Their system was doomed; and the Aristotelian philosophy, arising out of its obscurity, directed Christian thought for centuries, until it received the last addition to its lustre, when the Dominican and Franciscan friars adopted its tenets. It was under the great Dominican S. Thomas Aquinas,\* the Angelic doctor, that its adaptation to Christian theology was carried to its highest extent, and it became dominant in Christendom.

And here we must close our labours. We have seen Christianity arise under the shade of the mightiest political organization the world has ever known—an organization which seemed fated to endure while time should last—supported by mighty armies, united by a legislation of marvellous growth, which seemed to have its roots in the very nature of things, while the whole wisdom and ingenuity of the age seemed exercised in gratifying the passions of corrupt and fallen nature. And it had fallen, fallen before a system which contradicted every instinct

\* Born at Aquino, in Italy, A D. 1224; died 1274. His works make 17 vols. folio.

of luxury or worldly ease, which placed purity and self-conquest before men accustomed to the wildest excesses of self-indulgence, which required the sacrifice of pride and vain glory from the conquerors of the world, and deposed the gods whom they identified with all the victories of their mighty ancestors, to substitute in their place a crucified Jew. Proscribed and persecuted to the death by the might of imperial Rome, after three centuries of deadly struggles—not in the battle-field, not in the schools of philosophers, but in the blood-stained arena of the amphitheatre—Christianity emerged victorious.

But its second and more glorious victory was over the barbarians, who subverted the empire while they adopted its new religion.

Softening their ferocity, Christianity became the instrument of their civilization, and also the basis of their legislation. A more glorious career lay before the Faith than when it emerged from the catacombs triumphant under Constantine, for the whole basis of the legislation of Rome was of pagan origin; and the Faith which had reformed the individual had not, as we have seen, reformed the empire as a body politic—a body which had sunk into a state, feebly represented by the worst despotism of the East.

But in the Germans, the Goths, and Scandinavians, who had subverted the empire, the Church had a new and living material to work upon, men whose purity equalled their manly energy, and whose minds, like their bodies, had never been enervated by the effeminate civilization which had destroyed the virtue and manliness of the Roman.

She subdued their ferocity; taught them all that they



were accountable agents of a mighty Being, of Whom priest and monk were but the earthly representatives, and the bravest warriors the world had ever known wept as they heard the story of the Divine Love of Calvary, and learned to submit their proud imperious wills to the gentle yoke of the gospel.

Never in the history of the world has a creed exerted so mighty an influence; never was any philosophy so divinely beautiful; never any code of morals so spotlessly pure; never any power so nobly exercised as that of the Church Catholic, when victorious on the one hand over heresy, on the other over deadly moral evil, she became the mighty regenerator, under whose influence the whole modern constitution of the civilized world was framed after the ruin of the mighty empire of Rome.

## NOTES

Note A, page 14.—The Greek “*λειτουργία*,” used in the original of Acts xiii. 2, has been supposed by many learned theologians to bear especial reference to eucharistic celebrations, in which sense alone it was used in the primitive liturgies, the “*λειτουργία*,” or liturgy, referring simply to the eucharistic sacrifice. A. Lapeyre renders it as equivalent to “*sacrifice*,” and quotes Erasmus in support of that view. It is not, of course, contended that the ministry referred to was *confined* to eucharistic celebrations.

Note B, page 62.—This discovery was made during some excavations in the Catacombs of S. Agnes, on the Nomentan way. It had always been felt singular, that while the names of many inferior architects were handed down to posterity, that of the great designer of the Colosseum should nowhere be recorded. Martial, for instance, immortalizes one Rabirius, who simply enlarged the palace of Domitian; but although he lavishes the treasures of the poetic art on the Colosseum, he is silent concerning its designer. This is at once explained if, as the Romans would have said, he disgraced himself by becoming a Christian. The epitaph in question is as follows. I preserve the orthography.

SIC PREMIA SERVAT VESPASIANE DIRE  
PREMIATVS ES MORTE GAUDENTI LETARE  
CIVITAS VBI GLORIE TVE AVTORI  
PROMISIT ISTE DAT KRISTVS OMNIA TIBI  
QVI ALIVM PARAVIT THEATRV IN CELO

These words do not at first sight convey the impression they must produce when it is remembered that but *one* theatre was built in Vespasian's time, and also that the legislation of Nero against Christianity was yet unrepealed. Many antiquarians, eminent in Roman antiquities, including Rossi, maintain the statement given in the text to be beyond doubt.

Note C, page 70.—Between the Colosseum and the Lateran Basilica lies the famous church of S. Clement, where (it is piously believed) the relics of S. Clement and S. Ignatius repose, and which is mentioned in the writings of S. Jerome as preserving the memory of those saints. Here Cælestius was finally condemned by Zosimus, as S. Leo records: here S. Gregory the Great frequently preached.

By accident, the present prior, in the year 1857, discovered that the ancient church, to which alone these distinctions rightly belonged, existed beneath the modern edifice, filled to its roof with earth, and beneath the level of the modern soil, so great had been the changes around. It was accordingly restored, so far as possible, and the frescoes on its walls, as the author can testify from personal inspection, were marvellously retouched. But most remarkable of all was the discovery of the relics of S. Ignatius beneath the site of the ancient altar, in full accordance with the tradition which asserted them to repose in that spot, as stated in the text. On their discovery, as the good prior of S. Clement informed the author, they were borne, with all the pomp of incense, lights, and song, around the Colosseum, where, seventeen centuries earlier, the lions had left them. The contrast between the scene described in the text, and the latter scene as told by the prior, made a most vivid impression on the author's memory.

# INDEX

OF

## THE PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS MENTIONED IN THIS HISTORY.

Abbreviations.—P., Pope; B., Bishop; M., Martyr; H., Heresiarch; E., Emperor or Empress; K., King; G., General, etc.

- |  |                                      |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| Abdas (M.), 433.                             | Antherinus (P.) 124.                 |
| Acacius (B. of Amida), 434.                  | Antoninus Pius (E.), 84-86.          |
| Acacius (B. of Cæsarea), 267.                | Antony, S. (hermit), 212-214, 263.   |
| Acesius (B.), Novatian, 237.                 | Apiarius (African priest), 489.      |
| Ætius or Aëtius (G.), 401, 467, 470.         | Apollinaris (H.), 407.               |
| Agnes, S. (M.), 182.                         | Apollonius (M.), 104.                |
| Agricola (B.), Pelagian, 428.                | Arbogastes (E.), 352-355.            |
| Alaric (K.), 363, 376, 381.                  | Arcadius (E.), 362-385.              |
| Alban, S. (M.), 179.                         | Aristides (Apologist), 82.           |
| Albinus (G.), 33.                            | Arius (H.), 230-247.                 |
| Alexander (B. of Alexandria), 230-243. [246. | Arsenius (B. Meletian), 244.         |
| Alexander (B. of Constantinople),            | Arsenius (monk), 362.                |
| Alexander (B. of Hierapolis), 424.           | Artaxerxes (K.), 155.                |
| Alexander Severus (E.), 123.                 | Artemon (H.), 118.                   |
| Allectus (usurper), 174.                     | Athanasius, S., 235-305.             |
| Alpyius (B. of Thagaste), 338.               | Attila (K.), 440-443, 465-470.       |
| Ambrose (S.), B. of Milan, becomes           | Augustine, S. Early life, 334; bap-  |
| bishop, 309; contest with Justina,           | tism, 338; Bishop of Hippo, 348;     |
| 329; penance of Theodosius 344,              | death, 404.                          |
| death 364.                                   | Aurelian (E.), 161, 168.             |
| Ammianus (historian), 287.                   | Aurelius-Marcus (E.), 86-102.        |
| Ammonius Saccas (Platonist), 120.            | Auxentius (B. of Milan), 302-309.    |
| Amphilochius (B.), 324.                      |                                      |
| Anacletus (P.), 198.                         | Babylas (B. of Antioch), 126.        |
| Anastatius (Nestorian), 408. [454.           | Barcocab, 80.                        |
| Anatolius (B. of Constantinople),            | Barsumas (Nestorian), 426.           |
| Anianus (B. of Orleans), 466.                | Barsumas (Eutychian), 447-450,       |
| Anicetus (P.), 92.                           | 462. [318.                           |
|  | Basil, S. (B. of Cæsarea), 305, 317, |

- Basilides (H.), 75.  
 Belisarius (G.), 485.  
 Benjamin (M.), 433.  
 Boniface (G.), 401-404.  
 Brothers (the long), 370-372.  
 Cæcilianus (B. of Carthage), 226.  
 Cælestius (H.), 395, 397.  
 Candidian (at Ephesus), 411-418.  
 Caracalla (E.), 122.  
 Carausius (usurper), 173, 174.  
 Carpocrates (H.), 75.  
 Carus (E.), 169.  
 Carinus (E.), 170.  
 Cassian (monk), 399.  
 Celestine (P.), 409-417.  
 Celsus (Pagan writer), 102.  
 Cerinthus (H.), 43, 74.  
 Chrysostom (S. John), 342, 360-376.  
 Clemens (Flavius, M.), 44.  
 Clement (of Alexandria), 119.  
 Clovis (K.), 479-481.  
 Commodus (E.), 104-109. [249.  
 Constantine the Great (E.), 186-  
 Constantius Chlorus (E.), 173-187.  
 Constantius (E.), 250-272.  
 Constans (E.), 250-256.  
 Crispus, 241-2.  
 Cyprian, S. (B. and M.), 142-151.  
 Cyril (B. of Jerusalem), 259.  
 Cyril (B. of Alexandria). Early  
 life, 388-391; controversy with  
 Nestorius, 408-424; death, 443.  
 Dalmatius (monk), 420.  
 Damasus (P.), 303.  
 Decius (E.), 126-135.  
 Deogratias (B. of Carthage), 474.  
 Didius (E.), 109.  
 Diocletian (E.), 170-184.  
 Dionysius (B. of Alexandria), 128.  
 Dioscorus (B. of Alexandria), 443-  
 461.  
 Docetæ (H.), 48.  
 Domitian (E.), 43-45.  
 Donatists (H.), 226-229, 391-394.  
 Elagabalus (E.), 122.  
 Ennapius (Pagan writer), 508.  
 Eleutherus (P.), 105, 200.  
 Epiphanius (B. of Salamis), 357,  
 368, 372.  
 Eudoxia (wife of Arcadius), 367.  
 Eudoxia (wife of Val. III.), 472.  
 Eugenius (usurper), 353-355.  
 Eugenius (B. of Carthage), 482.  
 Eusebius (B. of Cæsarea), 232.  
 Eusebius (B. of Nicomedia), 231, 236.  
 Eusebius (B. of Dorylæum), 444, 458.  
 Eustathius (B. of Antioch), 243.  
 Eutropius (eunuch) 367-368.  
 Eutyches (H.), 444-464.  
 Fabian, S. (P.), 132.  
 Felix of Aptunga (B.), 227.  
 Flavian (B. of Antioch), 321, 361.  
 Flavian (B. of Constantinople),  
 444-450.  
 Florus (Gov. of Judæa), 33-35.  
 Fructuosus (B. and M.), 152-154.  
 Galerius (E.), 173, 185, 190.  
 Gallienus (E.), 159-160.  
 Gallus (E.), 140.  
 Genseric (K.), invades Africa, 402;  
 sacks Rome, 473; death, 475.  
 Gervasius (M.), 331.  
 George (intruding Bishop of Alex-  
 andria), 262-284.  
 Gildo (usurper), 362, 392.  
 Gordian (E.), 125.  
 Granianus Serenus, 81.  
 Gratian (E.), 310-324.  
 Gregory, S. (Nazianzen). Bishop  
 of Constantinople, 317-322;  
 death, 347.  
 Gregory, S. (Illuminator), 199.

- Gregory, S. (*Thaumaturgus*), 137.  
 Hadrian (E.), 78-84.  
 Helena (E.), 186, 238.  
 Hilarion (monk), 490.  
 Hilary (B. of Poitiers), 269.  
 Hilarus (or Hilary), legate of Leo at Ephesus (afterwards his successor), 446-451.  
 Hosius (B. of Cordova), 235, 269.  
 Hunneric (K.), 482-484.  
 Hypatia (Alexandria), 390.  
 Ignatius, S. (B. and M.), 65-70.  
 Ischyrras (Arian), 244.  
 Isidgerdes (K) 433.  
 Irenæus, S. (B. and M.), 105-110.  
 Ithacius (B.), 326.  
 James, S. (A. and M.), 31-32.  
 James, S. (B. of Nisibis), 272.  
 John, S. (A. and E.), 42-50.  
 John (B. of Jerusalem) 357-358.  
 John (B. of Antioch) 412-424.  
 Jovian (E.), 297-300.  
 Julian the Apostate, 273-296.  
 Julian (B. of Eclana), 398.  
 Julius (P.), 253.  
 Julius (B.), legate at Ephesus, 446.  
 Juvenal (B. of Jerusalem), 446.  
 Justin Martyr (S.), 85, 97. [464.  
 Justinian (E.), 485.  
 Lactantius, 241.  
 Leo, S. (P.), 439-469.  
 Libanus, 295.  
 Liberius (P.), 258, 303.  
 Licinius (E.), 190, 220, 225.  
 Macarius (monk), 215, 263.  
 Macedonius (B. of Constantinople), 252-7.  
 Macrianus (traitor), 141-157.  
 Macrinus (E.), 122.  
 Magnentius (usurper), 255-6.  
 Majorinus (B.), Donatist, 227.  
 Mammæa (E.), 123-124, 137.  
 Manes (H.), 166-168.  
 Marcellinus (Imperial Commissioner) 393, 396.  
 Marcellus (B. of Apamea), 315.  
 Marcia, 109.  
 Marcian (E.), 454-470.  
 Marcion (H.), 108.  
 Maris (B. of Chalcedon), 283.  
 Mark (B. of Arethusa), 291-2.  
 Marinus (M.), 160.  
 Martin S. (B. of Tours), 307-366.  
 Maruthas (B.), 433.  
 Maxentius (E.), 185-197.  
 Maximian (E.), 173-190.  
 Maximus (E., 3rd century), 125.  
 Maximus (E., 4th century), 189-221.  
 Maximus (usurper), 324-341.  
 Meletius (B. of Antioch), 316, 321.  
 Melito (B. of Sardis), 100.  
 Memnon (B. of Ephesus), 415, 418.  
 Menander (H.), 74.  
 Mensurius (B. of Carthage), 226.  
 Modestus (minister of Valens), 305.  
 Monica (S.), 334-340.  
 Montanus (H.), 105, 116.  
 Nectarius (B. of Constantinople),  
 Nero (E.), 24-38. [322.  
 Nerva (E.), 45-63.  
 Nestorius (B. and H.), 405-427.  
 Nintan S. (B.), 366.  
 Nitrian monks, 215, 370, 390.  
 Novatian (B. and H.), 146.  
 Novatus (H.), 146.  
 Numerian (E.), 169.  
 Odenathus (K.), 162.  
 Odoacer (K.), 475-6.  
 Orestes (Prefect), 389-390.  
 Origen, 135-139.  
 Orosius (against Pelagius), 396.  
 Pachomius (monk), 214.

- Pancras, S. (M.), 181.  
 Pantænus (Alexandria), 119.  
 Papias (B. of Hierapolis), 100.  
 Patrick, S., 432-433.  
 Paul, S. (A. and M.), 12-28.  
 Paul the Hermit, 212.  
 Paul (B. of Constantinople), 252-3.  
 Paul (B. of Samosata), 163-256.  
 Paul (B. of Emesa), 423.  
 Paula (virgin), 328.  
 Paulinianus, 357.  
 Paulinus (B. of Nola), 434-435.  
 Pelagius (H.), 394-8.  
 Perpetua (V. and M.), 111-114.  
 Pertinax (E.), 109.  
 Peter, S. (A. and M.), 28.  
 Peter (Bishop of Alexandria), 308.  
 Philip (E.), 125-126.  
 Pliny (letter), 63-64.  
 Polycarp, S. (B. and M.), 91-97.  
 Pontius (B. and M.), 124.  
 Porphyry (Pagan writer), 161.  
 Pothinus (B. and M.), 99.  
 Praxeas (H.), 118.  
 Priscillian (H.), 325-326.  
 Probus (E.), 169.  
 Pulcheria (E.), 385, 452.  
 Quadratus (Apologist), 81.  
 Quentin, S. (M.), 183.  
 Radagaisus (K.), 377.  
 Remigius (B. of Rheims), 479-480.  
 Rufinus (Origenist), 368-369.  
 Rufinus (Minister of Arcadius),  
     [343, 362-3].  
 Sabellius (H.), 118.  
 Salvian (historian), 436, 442.  
 Sapor, K. (3rd cent.), 156-158.  
 Sapor, K. (4th cent.), 268-272.  
 Saturninus (H.), 76.  
 Sebastian (M.), 181.  
 Serapis, 350-351.  
 Severus (Septimus, E.), 109-116.  
 Simon Magus (H.), 74.  
 Simeon Stylites, 492-494.  
 Stephen (P.), 149.  
 Stilicho (minister of Honorius),  
     362, 376, 378.  
 Symeon (B. of Jerusalem), 71.  
 Symeon (B. and M. Persia), 269-70.  
 Symmachus, 315, 337, 352.  
 Symphorosa (M.), 82-3.  
 Synesius (B. of Ptolemais), 387.  
 Tacitus (E.), 169.  
 Telemachus (M.), 377.  
 Tertullian, 115-117.  
 Theoctistus (B. of Cæsarea), 137.  
 Theodore (B. of Mopsuestia), 405.  
 Theodoret (B. of Cyrus), 413, 424,  
     453, 463.  
 Theodoric (K.), 467.  
 Theodosius the Great (E.), 313, 359.  
 Theodosius II. (E.), 385-454.  
 Theophilus (B. of Alexandria),  
     369-373, 388.  
 Titus (E.), 39-43.  
 Trajan (E.), 56-77.  
 Ulphilas (B. of the Goths), 308-9.  
 Valens (E.), 301-312.  
 Valens (B. of Mursa), 256.  
 Valentinian I. (E.), 301-307.  
     "    II. (E.), 311-353.  
     "    III. (E.), 401-470.  
 Valentine (H.), 76.  
 Valerian (E.), 140-158.  
 Valerius (B.), 348.  
 Vespasian (E.), 37, 38.  
 Victor (P.), 106.  
 Vincent, S. (M.), 183.  
 Vigilantius (H.), 358.  
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 Zenobia (Q.), 162-166.  
 Zosimus (P.), 397.

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